GMA accused of trying to cut deal with Marcoses

Story on Page A3

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email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph | Saturday, December 6, 2003 | 32 pages | vol.18 | no. 261 | www.inq7.net

GMA lifts freeze on death penalty

AT A GLANCE

As of November 2003	
No. of Female Death Convicts	25
No. of Male Death Convicts	985
Total No. of death convicts	**1,010**
1. Executed by lethal injection	7
2. Executed by Electric Chair (up to the suspension of Death Penalty in 1987)	84
Persons Sentenced to Death	**13**
(as of January 2003)	
Kidnapping Cases	**166**
Male	132
Female	12
(As of Nov 14, 2002)	
Affirmed Death Prisoners	
Rape	79
Murder	12
Rape with murder	14
Kidnapping	26
Robbery with homicide	9
Kidnapping with rape	1
Robbery with rape	1
Drugs	4
Total	146
(As of Sept. 1, 2003)	
Grand Total	**991**

(SOURCE: CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT OFFICE)

'It's time to take a stand for the people'

IN WHAT an anti-death penalty advocate said was a "desperate attempt" to court the "Chinese elite" for support, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday announced that she was lifting the moratorium on all judicial executions.

"I shall no longer stand in the way of the executions scheduled by the courts for January" Ms Macapagal said at a press conference in Camp Crame. "Much as I am averse, as a matter of principle, to the taking of human lives, the President must yield to the higher public interest when dictated by extraordinary circumstances."

Anticipating a fallout, especially from the Church and "pro-life" groups, the President sought "understanding," saying it was time for her "to take a stand for the people."

Her announcement triggered a flurry of praise and criticism.

Joaquin Sy, president of the civic group Kaisa para sa Kaunlaran, said the Chinese-Filipino community lately plagued by kidnappings was "happy" about the development.

Reno is a member of the Chinese-Filipino peace and order coordinating council, and a prime mover of the Citizens' Action Against Crime.

"We are taking this as an indication of the political will of the President," he said in a phone interview. "It's not only the community which believes that this is a deterrent to crime, but also the Department of Justice. This is an immediate solution to the rash of kidnappings, but we still believe that reforms are the long-term solutions."

But Rodolfo Diamante, executive director of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' episcopal commission on prison pastoral care, said Ms Macapagal lifted the moratorium that she imposed

(PNA) A3

A GOLDEN moment for the Philippines at the SEA Games in Hanoi, Vietnam—the women's archery team wins a gold medal. The team is composed of Rachelle Anne Cabral (facing the camera), Jennifer Chan, Jasmin Figueroa and Joan Tabang. (STORY ON PAGE A1)

Rapist-killer 1st in line for lethal injection

By Margaux C. Ortiz

BUREAU of Corrections chief Dionisio Santiago professed "mixed feelings" about the lifting of the moratorium on capital punishment. While the bureau has been preparing for the eventuality, he is saddened by the fact that a Filipino will be the first to meet his death next year.

The Filipino scheduled for execution on Jan. 30 was convicted of rape and homicide.

Santiago yesterday refused to provide details, and said he had to wait for the go-signal from Malacañang and the Department of Justice before releasing "confidential information."

"There are Chinese nationals convicted of trafficking tons of illegal drugs, but their execution has yet to be affirmed by the Supreme Court," Santiago told The Inquirer. "It's hard to play God on your own dahilan para (considering) ano."

(MAYVI SOLLER, A1)

RP bags golds in billiards, archery

By Ernesto Gonzales

HANOI—The Philippines finally added down the elusive first gold courtesy of the female archers Friday and added another in billiards after the 22nd South East Asian Games officially got going here.

The RP trio of Jennifer Chan, Jasmin Figueroa and Rachelle Anne Cabral outshot their Malaysian rivals in the finals, 218-211, and secured the women's team championship as the close of archery competitions at the National Sports Training Center.

As expected, Warren Kiamco and Leo Von Cortez delivered the gold in the 9-ball pool doubles in billiards at Ho Chi Minh, blanking Indonesians Muhamad Amanto and Nandra, 9-3.

Kiamco and Cortez had earlier ousted Vietnam's Nguyen Phuc Long and Nguyen Thien Nam, 9-3, in the semifinals.

The victories proved a big consolation for the Filipinos after the men's archery team, which had looked like potential gold medalists after topping the elimination, floundered in the semifinals and settled for the bronze.

(BY BASIL A)

Gov't calls in Marines in anti-kidnap campaign

By Christian V. Esguerra

POLICE accused businessmen Jose Nuga from suspected members of the notorious Wenny kidnap group in a bloody encounter yesterday afternoon.

But despite the string of recent victories, the government is still stepping up its anti-kidnapping campaign—literally—by calling in the Marines.

Beginning Monday at least 200 military officers will back regular police units in patrolling and manning checkpoints in crime-prone areas in Metro Manila, the chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) told reporters.

A beaming President Macapagal-Arroyo profusely congratulated NAKTF chief Angelo Reyes for the arrest earlier of the fourth and fifth most wanted kidnap-for-ransom syndicate leaders.

"I am not vowing that we will have a kidnap-free Christmas (but) there are things that must be done if we want a kidnap-free Christmas," Ms Macapagal said in a press briefing.

Reyes said members of the Army's 10th Infantry Brigade and the Marines would be deployed to help policemen "ground the heat" in Metro Manila beginning next week.

He said these soldiers would undergo training in police work during the weekend.

The deployment would be part of a three-point security plan, which includes the setting up of checkpoints and mobile police stations all over Metro Manila, Reyes said.

Police and their military backup, he said,

(MAYVI S, A11)

RESCUED kidnap victim, Jose Nuga, grabs the President in a burst of gratitude at Camp Crame where he was reunited with his family (PHOTO BY ...)

Ping or FPJ: Erap faces tough choice

By Christine O. Avendaño and Armando N. Nocum

THE PROBLEM of the divided opposition has now fallen squarely on the lap of ousted President Joseph Estrada. The caretaker leader of the anti-Macapagal forces has been asked to choose: Who should be requested to drop out of the presidential race, Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson or actor Fernando Poe Jr.?

Lacson said he met Thursday night with Estrada to tell him that he was determined about his presidential bid and that he was the man to support in the May election.

In previous interviews, Estrada had made it clear he would never allow two opposition candidates to run for office, but maintained that Poe—his friend and political supporter for years—should be the opposition's standard bearer.

Asked before the Lacson visit whether

(PDI), A11

Prosecutor floors Abu suspect with wicked uppercut

By Julie S. Alipala
AFP Inter-Island Bureau

ISABELA CITY, Basilan—A quick-thinking state prosecutor did a Manny Pacquiao last Tuesday when he knocked down a suspected Abu Sayyaf bandit who tried to wrestle away the M16 rifle of a jail guard after a court hearing.

Western Mindanao Assistant Regional Prosecutor Ricardo Cabucos floored Mahfoz Ditto with an upper

(MINDANAO NEWS, A6)

GMA brokers truce in PNP discord

By Christian V. Esguerra and Juliet L. Javellana

LESS TWO long-lost brothers, PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. and Director Edmundo Matillano, dismissed chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, yesterday buried the hatchet in dramatic fashion—right in front of a beaming President, other top officials including anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes and, not by chance, members of the media.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had just left the press conference on Reyes' recent successes against kidnap gangs when she returned to the conference room, escorting Matillano toward Ebdane.

The two top Philippine National Police officials then shook hands and embraced one another, a sight that was rare in the possible only the other day when Matillano were public and demanded

(PNA), A11

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2003

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

GMA, Marcoses cutting a deal?

By Dona Pazzibugan

A GROUP of Marcos rights abuse victims has accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of attempting to enter into a settlement with the heirs of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos over the forfeited $683 million Marcos Swiss deposits.

Solita Monsod, one of the victims' counsel, Rigoberto Tiglao, said last night. "There is no such plan and Solita would be the last person to have such information. The Marcos camp is with the courts and on a forum determined. I hope Solita does not expound this issue for their own agenda. The President has officially cited part of the camp for the human rights victims. Let's not politicize this issue for some agenda for serving this camp."

Monsod could not be reached for comment.

Tiglao said he spoke to Solita's colleagues, the President's chief of staff

Int'l press group airs alarm over radioman's slay

MANILA—The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) expressed concern yesterday over the murder of a Philippine journalist and demanded tougher action from President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In an open letter to Ms Macapagal, the Brussels-based group said "the situation in the Philippines is out of control and [should] be treated with the highest level of concern." Dakoon Radyo was gunned down in Mindanao City on Tuesday.

Ms Macapagal vowed to punish those behind the murders.

The IFJ called on the Macapagal administration to "take a consistent stand to prove [its] deeds and to ensure the safety of all journalists working in the Philippines" by launching a full investigation into Mr Dakoon's death.

"There is no more form of censorship than violence. In a country that worships the gun free from threats of violence and allowed to work in an environment free from fear," the group said. — AFP

SPORTS

Sports Editor Tobbyn S. Malasaloy
Assistant Editor Edwin H. Villanueva

SEA GAMES

Archers nail down first gold

By Ernesto Gonzales

JASMIN Figueroa takes aim at the target during the finals of the women's archery team competition

HANOI—This time, the arrows flew straight and true as the female archers gave the Philippines its first gold medal Friday in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here.

Overshadowed by their male counterparts in the first three days of action at the National Sports Training Center, Jasmin Figueroa, Rachelle Arnis Cabral and Jennifer Chan delivered on the final day of the event at the expense of Malaysia, 228-221.

The Filipinas, who finished third in the eliminations, earlier eliminated Thailand, 228-225, at the start of the head-to-head finals, then moved on top-seed Indonesia, 226-218, in the semifinals.

The Filipino bowmen, who entered in prime position for a gold after taking the eliminations and drawing a bye in the Olympic round, again hurried to pressure and settled for the bronze medal in the team competition.

Led by Hossein Mesia, the men's individual bronze medalist, the RP archers floundered in their semifinal match against Malaysia, 244-231, and had to face Thailand, 230-224, for the bronze.

Jubilation swept the Filipino camp after seven of the victory of the Pinay archers broke out before lunch.

With archery's I-gold, I-believe output, Philippine Olympic Committee president Cojuangco said the performance could serve as inspiring kickoff to the country's drive to improve on its fifth place overall finish two years ago in Malaysia.

Dayrit, along with first vice-chairman Mike Arroyo and IOC representative Frank Elizalde, was on hand when the Filipinas, after a slow start, explored past Malaysia and made sure they won't finish without sets of four golds up for grabs.

"With today's feats topping us the medal (We can't accept a gold medal chance)," said archery secretary general Lydia Mamaling, noting that the Filipinas also took the women's individual gold through Paeste Joy Marina in KL in 2001.

The small Filipino gallery was on pins and needles as Malaysia won the first end, 71-66, and maintained its lead, 139-135, after the second.

But the RP trio responded in the third end and finished off the Malaysians with an even more explosive performance in the fourth end to clinch the gold by seven points.

Mesia, who contributed 10 points in the semifinals of the individual race, Marvin Cordero and Arnold Belen just could not maintain their fiery form in the eliminations.

After eliminating the Filipinos, the Malaysians went all the way to finish on the top section in the event with 2 golds. The other gold went to Indonesia in the women's individual division.

GMA or Roco? LP split

By Carlito Pablo

THE LIBERAL Party is divided on whom to support between incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo and stalwart of Lakas standard bearer Raul Roco in the 2004 presidential election.

"We're split right in the middle," a top-ranking LP official said. "It's either GMA or Roco."

The LP leader, who requested anonymity, said that Liberals were scheduled to hold a crucial meeting Friday night to approve the party's selection framework which will serve as basis for choosing the party's favored candidate.

The draft framework seeks to, among others, ascertain the standalone position vis-a-vis controversial issues like the ill-gotten billions wealth, the coconut levy, the Hacienda Baling tobacco case and the pending plunder case against ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Those provisions in LP's draft framework will make it difficult for other presidential aspirants like movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo Lacson to snatch LP's endorsement.

Lacson has been tagged as the principal opposition in the May 1995 alleged summary executions of Kuratong Baleleng gang members. He also served as police chief during the Estrada administration.

On the other hand, Poe is a close associate of the Marcoses and a friend of Estrada.

The draft framework, which was set to be tackled last night, is anchored on LP's advocacy for conducting social reforms and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

The framework notes that the choice of candidate must not be solely based on "sheer popularity and winnability," although it acknowledges that those factors are also important.

When sought for comment, LP President Florencio Abad (Emission) said the party has not screened out yet any of the declared presidential candidates on its list.

Abad said that after Friday's meeting, the LP will hold talks with presidential aspirants to help the party determine who it will support in 2004.

Two LP members are in President Macapagal's Cabinet: Trade Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas and Sound chief Richard Delfonzo, who is also the President's campaign spokesperson.

Boxing, dirty politics, guns not for the Common Good

By Volt Contreras

BOXING hero Manny Pacquiao will not be rooting for this ugly-looking political party.

Aside from opposing the congressional pork barrel system and the death penalty, the Alliance for the Common Good, a movement led by pro-control advocate Reynaldo "Nanoy" Pacheco and lawyer Mario Ongkiko, is against any form of "militarization in society" including the sport of boxing.

This was part of the platform that the 41 members which also inclinded Angelino, announced at a press conference at the Club filipino yesterday.

Only the day before, the group filed a petition with the Commission on Elections seeking to be recognized as a party so it can participate in the 2004 elections.

Pacheco said the movement, launched in August 2002, will be offering an "alternative" for voters seeking an end to the country's "dirty politics" and the "terrorism that glorify guns, sex, the culture of death and violence, dishonesty, mis-translations and hatemongering."

"The party is categorical in its stand against the pork barrel, gambling, the death penalty, the use of torture to extract confession, violence in school fraternities and other institutions as well as sports where main aim is to inflict physical harm on the opponent," Pacheco, the Kapatirans president, said in response.

At the press forum, Pacheco and Ongkiko said they lumped boxing with the "violent sports" they object to because "the objective there is to beat up and knock down your opponent."

But Pacheco conceded using an "unsafe ground" in the issue, noting how the country's leaders from the Presidente down are glorified. Pacquiao is spectacularly awarding victory over a Mexican world title last month.

Ongkiko, the group's chair, said that while boxing may be popular in Metro because of the world champions it has produced, the public hardly hears of the many more aspiring pugilists who have sunk into poverty and misery after being ruined in the ring.

In its party platform submitted to the Comelec, the group said it was also against "lax wholesome" practices like allowing public officials to double as entertainers, media personalities or commercial endorsers, and of posing up billboards claiming this and that offered as being responsible for government projects.

It also called for an end to the practice of appointing former military officers to head the defense department.

The group seeks an amendment to the Senior Citizens Law by scrapping the requirement that an applicant for benefits under the law must have an annual income of not more than P60,000.

"Moving the age requirement of 60 is enough for one to access such benefits as discounts on medicines, transportation and others," said Pacheco.

The movement's platform asks that elected or appointed officials follow a strict moral code and adopt parties, private politicos, quoting occasionally from the Bible.

The group's foreign policy espouses progressive dimensions, and envisions the country as "a nation that is friendly to all and enemy to none."

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The Bato Balani Club of Guagua, Pampanga one of the oldest and respected "Agunan" in Pampanga will be celebrating its 77th Anniversary Ball today December 08, 2001, Saturday, 8:00 PM at the Guagua National Colleges Open Quadrangle. This affair traditionally gathers many of the most respected kapampangan in Central Luzon. Supreme Emmanuel "Teddy" Tiangco, who is also the President of the Rotary Club of Metro San Fernando, Pampanga, heads this year celebration.

They're all alike, says CPP on '04 candidates

LUZON (2T)—After sullen nothing that a who he orders one the suicide For it in the may 2004 elections is inevitable, the Communist Party of the Philippines yesterday declared that it sees no hope for the country from among those aspiring for the highest position in the land.

Dismissive "the Reject" Bonil, CPP spokesperson, yesterday said there was no essential difference among those who have declared their intentions to run for presidency in next year's polls.

"Administered opinion-mongers the elections is driving more and more people to crush the path of revolution," Bonil said in a statement released by the Party information Bureau.

Aside from incumbent President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, those who have already declared their presidential candidacy were former Sen. Raul Roco, movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. and opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Bonil noted that the platforms the candidates have presented, as well as their annual records and actions, "manifest the absence of any essential difference among the various reactionary candidates and their political parties."

"And that includes FPJ. Even with his deafening silence on issues and his government-for-a-day ploy, the traditional politicians behind him are giving unambiguous clue that FPJ will be of the same mold and implement the same anti-people policies," Bonil told the reporters in a telephone interview.

In the meantime, Bonil said there's no exception among the candidates, even those who have the opening up of the economy in favor of "globalization," neo-liberalism, deregulation, privatization and denationalization, and the surrender of the national patrimony and granting of privileges to foreign capitalists." *Inflo T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Second House seat for Bohay party-list group

MUN BOHAY do lawsuits to go before the next elections, the Supreme Court has given a party-list group with links to Rep. Rilay Bohay II. El Shaddai movement member won in Congress.

In a four-page resolution penned by Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., the tribunal ruled that the party-list group Bohay Sinugong Pamalaong (Bohay) was entitled to a second seat in the House of Representatives.

Accordingly, the high court ordered the Commission on Elections to proclaim Bohay's second nominee. In this instance, Arsenio Balisacan, recently resigned as chief of Macarthur, recently took his party-list seat in Congress.

The court said Bohay had obtained more than 4 percent of the total number of votes cast in the last party-list elections and more than half a percent for all national seats, like other party-list groups. *Philip C. Bohay*

US exec sees peace in South in 2 years

By Jael B. Escorilla
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and TJ Burgonio

ISNAN CITY—A peace agreement with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front could be signed in the next two years, a United States development aid official said yesterday.

"I think it's going to happen, I'm very positive," said John Balcom, deputy chief of party of the Growth with Equity in Mindanao, a development agency funded by the US aid for International Development (USAID).

Balcom, who toured the municipality in the wake of reports that formal peace talks between the government and the MILF could take place in Kuala Lumpur as early as January, said that in anticipation of the peace agreement, the USAID has set aside US$50 million for financial and technical assistance to MILF members.

He said this offer is yours accord a signed, Mindanao will be the focus of development efforts from the influx of investments and aid.

The MILF's peace day incident on a complete withdrawal of military troops from the Buliok complex, its captured stronghold in central Mindanao, before formal talks can resume.

MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalo assured that a complete withdrawal as well as the dismantling of artillery changes against MILF leaders were some of the conditions the MILF set during a series of eight-hour-long meetings.

"Whatever the agreements must be complied with. Otherwise, even the smallest agreements cannot be implemented," he said in a phone interview.

Foreign Secretary Blas Ople has said that formal talks would resume on the first week of January. He said the military was willing to withdraw as far as 1.5 kms from the Buliok complex, the main MILF camp straddling the provinces of Cotabato, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao until it was overrun by government troops last January.

He did not mention the other condition, the dropping of charges against top MILF leaders who were tagged in the raid of bandit attacks in Mindanao in March and April that left 50 people dead.

Kabalo said a pulled with shamal was "not worth it."

Balcom said the programs to be funded by USAID money would be patterned "after the very successful program of ZOAI for the three Sectoral Operation Peace started in 1997."

After the signing of the 1996 peace agreement with the MNLF, SOM implemented the Emergency Livelihood Assistance Program (ELAP), followed by a project called the Livelihood Enhancement and Peace (LEAP) program.

While ZLAP concentrated on the immediate rehabilitation of MILF communities through grants and aid, LEAP brought in technology transfer and training assistance.

Balcom said that even as the funds have already been earmarked for the anticipated peace deal with the MILF they will remain unmarked until the agreement is signed.

The MILF said it was willing to sign a peace accord "if the instrument would provide [a] solution to the Bangsamoro's quest for self-determination."

But Kabalo accused the government of being insincere about pursuing peace.

He cited recent pronouncements from government officials, including that of President Macapagal-Arroyo, that the government was ready to sacrifice the peace talks to advance its anti-terror campaign.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, December 6, 2003
1st Week of Advent

In Reading: Is 30:19-21, 23-26
Gospel: Mt 9:35-38; 1, 6-8

Jesus went around all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and he cured every sickness and disease. When he saw the crowds he was moved with pity, for they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the workers are few. Ask the master of the harvest to send workers to gather in his harvest."

Then he called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority over the unclean spirits to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.

"Go instead to the lost sheep of the people of Israel.

"Go and proclaim this message: 'The Kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, cleanse the lepers, and drive out demons. You received this as a gift, so give it as a gift."

Commentary

The Gospel writers of Jesus ministry is going from one place to another preaching the good news of God's reign, to the process of exorcism and restoration. He denounced the people's miseries and problems. By reaching of Jesus is not devoid of concern. It is deeply rooted in the people's conditions and hard realities. Jesus' teaching and preaching activities go hand in hand with health and organization. Jesus both them and various that were laborers are needed to make the announcement of the reign of God.

(Claretian Publications Inc., 4 Maryott St., UP Diliman, Diliman, Quezon City 1101 Metro Manila, Philippines. Tel. 921-7060, fax 921-7529. E-mail: publishers@cpi.ph Website: http://www.bible-reflections.com/claretian-publications.htm) © http://www.claretian.com.ph (Claretian Inc. the Philippines)

RP bags golds in billiards, archery

Continued from page A1

Garnering an earlier bronze by top male archer Florante Matan in the men's individual event, the Filipinos proceeded in the opening ceremony late in the day at the National Stadium brimming with pride and confidence as the No. 1 medal pickr.

With the billiards gold, the Filipinos posted a 2-0-1 gold-silver-bronze output behind Malaysia which had a 2-1-0 tally. Indonesia was third at 1-1-2 followed by Thailand at 1-0-3, Vietnam at 1-0-0 and Singapore at 0-2-0.

The Filipinos also created a lot of stir in monopolizing seven of eight available berths Saturday's finals. These also heaped on yesterday's own share of golds as its top bets reached the semifinals of individual equal play.

"We're so kaboboyan na rin ito (This is for our countrymen)," declared Philippine Olympic Committee president Cielo Dayrit, who dashed to the archery venue upon learning of the Filipinos' triumph along with ROC representative Frank Hsieh.

"This is a good start for the Philippines," said Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain. "This is quite unusual because it was from the opening ceremonies."

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo has been informed of the gold medal and added she has sent her congratulations and told the athletes to keep up the good work.

The RP archers, divided in the eliminations, easily battled Thailand, 230-195, in the quarterfinals then had no sweat in the duel against top-seed Indonesia before pulling through, 229-219, in the semifinals.

The silver against the Indons must have drained their energy as the Filipinos took some time to recover their bearings against the Malaysians, who took the lead in the first two of the four shooting sessions, 141-139.

But Figueroa shot 28 points, Chan added a 27 and Cabral fired a 24 that allowed the Filipinos to seize the lead in the third and then sweal their ground in the last frame to win by seven points.

Their male counterparts, led by Matan, couldn't summon their old fire in the semifinals against Malaysia and bowed out, 244-221, to the discomfit for the bronze with Thailand, the Filipinos finally prevailed, 234-216.

The 1 gold, 2 bronze performance was a far better than archery's output of a single gold in Malaysia two years ago through Paolo Jay Morfini, who failed to join the team this time due to an injury.

Ninth seeder McEligot joined three losing teammates into the semifinals by outclassing Cambodia's Chan Ioan-ith in the 64-kg division. The other semifinalists are Juanito Magliquian, Chris Gamot and Florencio Fortuito.

On three, woman international master Beverly Nicdao-Cu reached the semifinal at the expense of WIM Christine Rose Marinano while GM Jaye Antonio and IM Mark Paragua were battling for semifinal slots.

The Filipinos advanced few minutes into the bodybuilding finals, annexed themselves of a bronze in men's pole and women's down tennis but were outmuscled by Thailand in women's volleyball, 25-20, 25-17, 25-9. The women's gymnastics team finished fourth.

Thailand relegated RP to third place in water polo with a 9-7 win.

Cynthia Nina Jarvoso and Anna Ferreira Aurore combined to give RP a 2-0 rout of Myanmar in the quar terfinals of women's tennis but the men's team was handled out by Indonesia, 3-0.

Alvin Augusto and Bernie Cardona gun for the light men's pair today in rowing along with Jose Rodriguez in the light men's singles scull.

Spearheaded by defending champions Gershom Halubad and Jose Mari Balilhan, the Filipinos shoot for the team karate title in karatedo. The team lone gold in both divisions in site-spo'ed grabs.

Adrian Aquino, a top gold prospect in the 49-kg division, gets going against T. H. Thuong Luu of Myanmar while Jamel Pesanta faces Ni Quoc Huy of Vietnam in the 70-kg class.

The shooters join the fray with Gilbert Bandon, Caroline Rosales and Marcelo Chantiles competing in the 10-meter air pistol, 60 shots and Thirteen Cantada and Sonia Agoo do-taking part in the 25-m sports pistol.

Swimming starts with heats in women's 100 freestyle and 200 IM, men's 400 IM and men's and women's 200 backstroke.

IT'S A hello-ego for Jennifer Chan and the Philippine ladies archery team. (PHOTO BY JOE GALVEZ)

Rapist-killer may be first . . .

Continued from page A1

There are other Chinese drug lords on death row, he said.

According to Santiago, bureau personnel have started preparing the lethal injection chamber. He said the bureau had a supply of chemicals sufficient for four executions.

"I am pro-life, but what good is it to preserve one life if it endangers the lives of many?" he said.

In all, the executions of 165 convicts has been affirmed by the Supreme Court.

Deterrent

Explaining the legal process, Santiago said that once the high court affirms a conviction, the lower court sets a date for the executions to be carried out.

He said that, however, Malacañang had the final say on whether a convict died—as final.

Tanodbayan Simeon Marcelo, chair of the Inter-agency Against Crime and Corruption, was pleased at the lifting of the moratorium on capital punishment.

"We are happy that President Macapagal-Arroyo has finally ratified the death penalty's importance in deterring crimes," he said in a phone interview.

Jimenez pointed out that the death penalty should be judiciously and consistently applied "even beyond the election period."

He said the ViACC would hold a command against with presidential and vice presidential candidates on Dec. 17 to stress that they would not postpone executions, especially in cases involving heinous crimes.

Prosecutor floors Abu suspect

Continued from page A1

ver although the latter was taller and heavier built than he.

Ibba is facing charges in connection with the Aug. 8, 2001 beheading of nine residents of Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay.

The hearing had just ended at 11:45 a.m. when Ibba tried to grab the rifle dangling on the shoulder of warden Jamael Tahil. The warden was packing handcuffs on Ibba.

Hit hard

As Ibba and Tahil grappled for the firearm, Cabanos, who was standing near to them, punched the suspected Abu Sayyaf member. The punch the 5'6" average built prosecutor threw was so hard that the 5'8" muscular Ibba fell on his back.

More than 40 people, including 17 other Abu Sayyaf suspects and 12 jail guards, were in the courtroom when the incident happened.

The crowd was initially shocked but later applauded when it realized that the 43-year-old Cabanos had succeeded in subduing Ibba.

The other suspected Abu Sayyaf members remained calm throughout the incident.

Cabanos said the bronze-star Ibba was determined to take Tahil's rifle and people inside the courtroom could have been killed as a result. He said he believed Ibba had coordinated his actions with the other suspects because some of their relatives who regularly attended hearings were conspicuously absent on Tuesday.

Judge Danilo Reces said it was possible the incident would be repeated unless serious security measures were implemented.

Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, Bataan police chief, assured him that more policemen would be deployed in the next hearings.

GMA lifts freeze …

Presidential

on Sept. 30, 2003, because she needed the Chamber of Deputies's community's financial support for her election run in 2004.

"It's about the elections," Climaco said in a phone interview. "What else can it be? She is the perfect example of a politician surrounding herself with people who will maintain dominance."

At the same press conference, Angelo Reyes, chief of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force, said the President's decision recommend the restoration of punishment that, he claimed, was the principal deterrent to crime.

No choice

Ernesto Paz, president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop), welcomed Ms Macapagal's move, saying she had "no choice" but to enforce the law.

Paz told reporters that Ms Macapagal announced the lifting of the moratorium the other day during a meeting with various groups, including Ecop.

He expressed the hope that this would serve as a warning to kidnap-for-ransom groups.

Turn-around

Only 11 days earlier, the President had declared that capital punishment was not a deterrent to kidnapping and other heinous crimes.

"We have had executions in the past and these have provided a reason rather to vent the public's ire against hardened criminals. But these executions did not stop heinous crime," she said in a statement on Nov. 25.

"Executions may give us some form of emotional release and a transient sense of retribution and security, but the more effective solution for forbidding the entire criminal justice system against criminals, so that we can effectively end kidnapping, robbery, murder or rape."

But yesterday she said: "The spate of victims of heinous crimes has spread all over the national community and I shall not turn my back against the cry for just retribution under the law."

Triumph

Sen. Robert Barbers of the ruling Lakas-CMD hailed the President's decision as a "triumph of justice" and a "triumph of victims of heinous crimes."

But here said the resumption of mass executions in January showed Ms Macapagal's desire to stamp out the criminality that, he said, has been greatly affected the administration's economic programs.

But Senate President Franklin Drilon said lifting the moratorium was but a "quick fix" to the resurgence of kidnapping and other organized crimes.

Drilon warned that unless the government implemented major reforms in the enforcement, prosecution and judicial systems, the death penalty would not solve the country's peace and order problems.

What about the boss?

Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda said the President's move would be effective only if the crime kingpins themselves were made to pay for their "heinous crimes."

"The underlings of the crime world are the ones usually paraded as press conferences, while their bosses happily go on with their evil schemes," Legarda said. "These underlings are replaced as quickly as they are caught or intimidated by the police."

Sen. Francis Pangilinan said it would take a "comprehensive approach, one that addresses the issues of law and order, poverty reduction and the general quality of life of our people," to criminality.

"Time and again, we have seen that the death penalty does not address rising criminality," Pangilinan said, adding:

"Lifting the moratorium is a misstep measure. While we sympathize with victims of crime, we do not think the call to open the floodgates to death penalty will impede the death penalty but ensuring reforms that will lead to a more efficient police and justice system."

Lawyer Theodore Te, coordinator for Metro Manila of the Free Legal Assistance Group that provides pro bono (free) services to survivors of death row, said the right to life cannot and should not be played on the altar of politics."

"The (ex-President) did when she announced that she would not stand in the way of the implementation of the death penalty in January of 2004—an election year on her," Te said. "It is a statement."

He also said the President "cannot proclaim that she is mentally opposed to any measures that takes life and, at the same time, stand by while blood stains her hands."

Being political

"That is, to put it charitably, hypocritical; it is, to put it bluntly, being political," he added.

"So what else is new?" said the CHED's Sta. Maria. "She is a consummate trailblazer—always vacillating between her conscience and her constituents. When can we expect from a leader who cannot stand her ground?"

But Director Nicanor de Leon of the Station 4, Capital Region Police Office said lifting the moratorium on the death penalty was a "good way" to deter criminals.

Northern Police District Director Marcelino Franco also said the move would serve to test the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent.

Flip-flop

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales, principal author of the proposed law abolishing the death penalty, pointed to the House, called on the President to stop "flip-flopping" on the issue.

"Why the sudden change [in her position]?" Rosales said. "My message to the President is she should not be flip-flopping because there's no reason she has now to change her mind from two years ago."

Rosales said only the revamp and upgrading of the law enforcement agencies involved in anti-kidnapping operations would help solve the problem.

She also said people were beginning to suspect that Ms Macapagal lifted the moratorium just to win over the Chinese-Filipino community and "give her more votes come election time."

Victims' human rights

But Enrique del Rosario, Bonapon Pelayo and Rosalind Ibay, members of Pamanvilla, Inc., of Cainta, urged the people to stand behind the President on the issue.

"The administration must hasten in combating criminality and deserves public support," Pelayo said.

Pamanvilla said: "While people clamor for the human rights of those convicted, we should also clamor for the human right of those killed and those traumatized by heinous crimes."

Ricardo Salado, deputy spokesperson for the President, told reporters that there were 16 convicts on death row scheduled for execution.

He said the earliest date of execution would be Jan. 20 for two convicted kidnappers. But Bureau of Corrections chief Dionisio Santiago said a rape-convict was first in line. (See story on Page A13.)

Many response

Mel Mariano of Amnesty International-Philippines said they were saddened by what appeared to be on hasty a response to the rise in high profile crimes.

Teodoro Casiño, secretary general of the militant Bayan (Kilusang Makabayan), said: "The President's move to garner right-populist votes. It's populist in the sense that but doesn't really solve anything. Re-imposing the death penalty won't lead to better law enforcement."

Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida, however, had this to say on the matter: "It is better for (convicts) to die legally than for them to be killed extra-judicially in the streets, it was a 'very difficult' decision for the President to allow the moratorium," said her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye.

"But she has to make it, and she's answering her promise… (to us President.) Perhaps only her critics make her a great President." Reports from Christine F. Esguerra, Julie Lobregat-Ann Rosal, Blanche S. Rivera, TT Bueza, Michael Lim Ubac, Cynthia D. Rebano, Norman Bordadora, Philip C. Tubeo, Marites B. Sherill and Edson Castro Bordas Jr.

Parole, pardon

TO FULFILL a Christmas tradition, the President granted conditional pardon with parole to 32 prisoners terminally or seriously ill or deemed overage.

In a memorandum to Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and Santiago, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo ordered the release of Marietes Barcena Aseng, Benjamin Fernandez Abing, Roberto Espino Bugenia, Julian Gesmundo Hernandez, Jose Duyong Tolentino, Nestor de la Pena Vilma, Abraham Kaspar Cadi, Alberto Abella Pastor, Honorio Jerry Raptan, Lucio Cana Manriquez, Edison Ibarra Ibanez and Sotero Cruz Fernando.

Most of them were serving life terms for crimes like rape, homicide, robbery with homicide and murder. They are afflicted with pneumonia, anemia, heart disease, osteoarthritis and tuberculosis.

A 70th convict, Juan Salvatierra, who died in October, would have been paroled.

The President also granted "absolute and unconditional pardon" to Jose "Jojo" S. Zaporta, a former mayor of Tacloban, who was convicted by the Sandiganbayan of arbitrary detention. He had been given a jail term of from four months to less than two years.

The WORLD

John Lawrence B. Guerz

Kissinger encouraged Argentine junta

BUENOS AIRES—Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger told Argentina's military junta "we would like you to succeed" months after it embarked on a bloody crackdown against leftists and dissidents, newly declassified documents show.

Kissinger, worried about the spread of leftist movements in Latin America in the 1970s, offered his support to the Argentine juntas at three other stopovs of his many flights abroad were nothing to the fourth American country.

His comments were revealed in newly declassified documents obtained by the independent National Security Archives and released Thursday. They detail an Oct. 7, 1976 meeting in New York between Kissinger and Argentina's foreign minister at the time, Rivo Adis Cesar Augusto Guzzetti.

Kissinger has increasingly faced criticism for US backing of authoritarian governments in Latin America and Southeast Asia at part of Washington's bid at the time to contain the spread of communism.

He has denied ever condoning human rights abuses, and did not immediately respond to calls for comment.

In the seven-page transcript marked "secret," Kissinger is quoted as telling Guzzetti that human rights issues were growing in importance.

According to the document, he often appear, nonetheless, to the military rulers who seized power in a coup in March 1976.

"Look, our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed," Kissinger said, according to the documents, first reported by The Miami Herald. "I have an old-fashioned view that friends ought to be supported. The quicker you succeed, the better."

The Argentine military launched to systematic crackdown on leftist groups in March 1976, beginning six years of brutal rule that saw 9,000 people disappear, according to a government report. Human rights groups put the number at around 30,000.

When Kissinger sat down with Guzzetti at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel for the meeting, Argentina's regime had been drawing condemnation from many countries for alleged rights abuses.

Last year, declassified state department documents suggested junta officials increasingly believed Washington was willing to overlook their methods to contain political dissent.

Robert Hill, then US ambassador in Buenos Aires, detailed the sentiment in a series of diplomatic cables sent back to Washington, described Argentine officials as returning from meetings with Kissinger and Vice President Nelson Rockefeller in early 1976 "in a state of jubilation."

"What is not understood in the United States is that you have a civil war," he told Guzzetti. "We read about human rights problems but not the context." AP

WORLD BRIEFS

36 die in Russia blast

MOSCOW—An explosion tore through a crowded commuter train near Russia's volatile Chechnya region on Friday, two days before a parliamentary election, killing 36 people and authorities suspected a suicide bomb attack. Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev, head of the party backed by President Vladimir Putin in Sunday's polls, vowed to track down the perpetrators, saying, "The ground will be no safer than hell." The emergencies ministry said 36 people were killed and more than 150 injured in the blast, which went off before 8 a.m. as the packed train was just outside Yessentuki, a town in Russia's southern region. Both the FSB and the interior ministry said a woman appeared to have detonated the explosion which struck the train's second carriage from the front. "We believe the explosion was carried out by a woman," a spokesperson for the ministry said by telephone. Yessentuki state television showed the carriage reduced to a mass of twisted metal and torn bodies were thrown from damaged, though the train remained upright on the track. Reuters

Attacks on US convoys

BAGHDAD—Two bomb attacks hit US convoys in Baghdad on Friday morning, a US military spokesperson said, adding that there was no immediate reaction casualties. "We can confirm that at least two SUVs (sport utility vehicles) were hit and burned by, and 60 insurgents exploded in Baghdad," the spokesperson said. "We don't have any casualty information at this time. More information will follow." One of the explosions hit a convoy as it was passing past an intersection in south Baghdad just north of the former Fardat military base. AFP

Vaccine against SARS

LONDON—A genetically engineered vaccine against SARS has shown promising results in early tests in monkeys and could pave the way for a possible first human vaccination, scientists said on Friday. Two weeks after researchers at the University of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania injected six rhesus macaques with the vaccine, all of the animals showed a detectable immune system response against the coronavirus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. "We are hopeful that this approach will lead to a protective vaccine against SARS," said Dr. Andrea Gambotto, who headed the research team. The SARS outbreak which began in southern China last November killed 774 people and infected 8,098 in some 30 countries, according to the World Health Organization. Reuters

Polish PM hurt

WARSAW—Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller injured two vertebrae when his helicopter made an emergency landing Thursday, but a spokesperson said the 58-year-old leader has flown to Brussels for European Union summit attending Poland's first [illegible] as members. Miller and seven others were hospitalized after the accident in a Warsaw suburb. His doctor said. A government spokesperson said engine failure appeared to have been the cause. AFP

New breast cancer test

SAN MATEO—A first-of-its-kind genetic test will soon be available to help women with breast cancer make one of four crucial decisions: whether or not to undergo the injury of chemotherapy. Genomic Health Inc., a Silicon Valley biotech company, said has identified nearly two dozen genes that, taken together, can predict with a high degree of accuracy the likelihood that tumors will recur in women whose breast cancer was caught at an early stage. Currently, doctors guide the chances of a relapse is pretty much the same way they have been doing for the decade century: by looking at the patient's age, the size of the tumor and the tumor's aggressiveness. If the chances of recurrence are seen as very low based on this general list, a woman may opt to not endure the crushing, hair-loss and high cost of chemotherapy. Even the odds of the cancer coming back are high, she may view chemo as the difference between life and death. AP

Fallout from gay bishop

KUALA LUMPUR—The Anglican Church in Southeast Asia announced Friday it has broken ties with its US counterpart for consecrating openly gay bishop V. Gene Robinson, deepening the church's global rift over the issue of homosexual ordination. Archbishop Yong Ping Chung, the Anglican Primate for Southeast Asia, said leaders representing around 170,000 Anglicans in nine Asian countries voted unanimously on Nov. 25 to break with the Episcopal Church, the US branch of the 77 million-member worldwide Anglican Communion. The vote was taken at a special meeting of the church's Southeast Asian province called after Robinson, the Episcopal bishop of New Hampshire, was elected but has drawn the church into turmoil around the world and split it into camps of liberals and conservatives. Robinson is the first openly gay man to hold the position of bishop in any major Christian denomination. AP

Case vs Jacko in trouble

LOS ANGELES—Two weeks after Michael Jackson's arrest on child molestation charges, the case against him appears to be in trouble as reports about the alleged victim's family history surface, a star claimed Thursday.

Prosecutors, who booked Jackson on multiple counts of lewd and lascivious behavior with a child earlier, have delayed the filing of formal charges that were due early this week but which are now not expected until late next or the next week.

And, following an almost carnival media frenzy when the "King of Pop" turned himself in to a waiting police in the California town of Santa Barbara on Nov. 20, the 45 press now appears more guarded in assessing the case.

"It's highly unusual for charges like this to take so long to be set forth," Jackson's publicist Stuart Backerman said. "That leads me to believe that there are some problems with putting forth the charges."

Prosecutors said charges against Jackson accused of abusing a 13-year-old boy in 1993 in a case that was settled out of court for a large payment—but have delayed to allow them to set up a website to cope with the huge media and public interest in the celebrity case. AFP

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Kiamco-Corteza strikes paydirt

By Ray Loarca

HO CHI MINH City,—As expected, the touted cue artists delivered.

Sweetie Lee Sin Corteza and Warren Kiamco posted their talents last night in style the 9-ball gold medals, 9-3, at the expense of the Malaysians and produce the Filipinos' first gold in the billiards and snooker's competition in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games.

Earlier, the women's archery team scored the breakthrough victory for Team Philippines in Hanoi, where most of the events are being held.

The 24-year-old Corteza is also the 9-ball gold medalist in the 1999 Brunei SEAG and 9-ball champion in the 2001 Manila Lamptar edition, while the 23-year-old Kiamco also has a gold to show in the 15-ball of the Alaskera edition.

"We dedicate this victory to our countrymen back home," said Corteza and Kiamco, both veterans of international competitions.

En route to the finals, the Corteza-Kiamco duo beat the Vietnamese pair of Nguyen Phuc Long and Nguyen Than Hung, 9-3.

The Malaysian tandem of Tan Eak Thian and Doublet Amir beat the Indonesians in their own semifinal duel.

The RP billiards and snookers team, powered by fifteen "Bata" Reyes and Francisco "Django" Bustamante, is predicted to attain a minimum of two golds and a maximum of five.

Reyes, a Field of Dames, is slated to take part in four events, including the 9-ball, where he and Bustamante are the prohibitive favorites.

The two world-beaters Filipinos are coming off strong performances in recent international competitions, including the first Philippine Open in Manila, where Reyes wound up second behind former world champion Ribu Immonen of Finland, and Bustamante third.

Malaysia	6	5	0	1	Singapore	4	2	2
Philippines	3	1	1	1	East Timor	4	1	3
Indonesia	1	2	2	5	Laos	4	0	0
Thailand	1	0	0	1	Myanmar	4	0	0
Vietnam	1	0	0	1	Brunei	4	0	0
					Cambodia	4	0	0

RP SCHEDULE

MICHAEL Jacalan of the Philippines (in white head cap) beats Mechai Srisidat of Thailand (in the ball in the two teams' water polo battle for bronze medal. The Filipinos bowed to the Thais.

RP karatekas eye 3 golds; netters gain

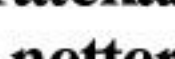
By Ernesto Gonzales and Ray Loarca

HANOI/Ho Chi Minh City—Rated highly by its Indian training consultant, the RP karatedo team gets going today vowing to grab at least three golds in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here.

Led by defending champion Conchito Mulaled and Joan Mae Abila, have chopsueyish kick-action-gyeling team to make and made karate (sparring) team golds at the Thai Lan gymnasium.

The Filipinas also see action in the kata and female kata (form) team finals with a squad spearheaded by Cherry Tugbo, who won a gold in the individual kata in the last Asian Games in Busan, Korea last year.

Romnick Golpeje, a lawyer Ishidi Cup champion, who has been training the nationals since Nov. 27, pushes three golds in the women's division



from Mulaled in the +60kg class, Abila hopes in the +48kg Dan-kei and Mirasol Bellino in the -52kg category.

Everybody's capable of a gold in the men's division: Golpeje said after putting the Filipinos through 1 and ½ hours of rigid workout yesterday.

Looking fit and agile at his oldness, the 38-year-old Golpeje has been serving an out-of-RP training sojourn since 2001.

Golpeje, who has instructed two previous training sessions with the nationals this year, said the Filipinos have developed into gold-medal contenders with new technical expertise in footwork and leg action.

"Now they are no longer bulls," he said, referring to the old RP offensive tactic of just rushing forward towards the enemy.

The pesty Mulaled, who started training only after joining the Ho Phi-Tuga Beauty contest last June, but also won a bronze in the +60kg class in the Asian Games.

In tennis, the Philippine women's team advanced Over the men's squad got routed Over Indonesia-Bindo.

Powered by Anna Patricia Inumerables and Czarina Mae Arevalo, the Filipinas reached a 3-0 victory over Myanmar as they forged a semifinal battle with the Indons today.

Inumerables, the country's top-ranked female player, whipped Nyi Mon Tun, 6-1, 6-1, while Arevalo dumped Aung Thu, 6-1, 6-0.

Seniors duo combined with doubs Inumerables Lubay to beat the tandem of Aung Thu-each Chit Su Yee, 6-3, 3-6, 7-6, for the no-beating doubles.

Cager Gonzales taken to hospital

By Ray Loarca

HO CHI MINH CITY—National cager Wesley Gonzales was taken to the hospital here last night after a prolonged bout with allergy.

Fortunately, the routine check-up yielded normal results and Gonzales' source confirmed.

He was later taken to be back to the hotel of RP Cebuano Ubodlli.

The 6-foot-4 Gonzales, who starred for the Ateneo Blue Eagles in the last UAAP, was under observation in the medical clinic of the Philippine delegation for the past three days.

Tito Bracero, deputy administrator of Team Philippines in this city, said the 21-year-old Gonzales is up and well. "Everything is okay. He just needs some rest."

Gonzales' allergy was traced to a medicine he took in Manila before the bulk of the Philippine delegation left Manila on Tuesday.

Ate del Rosario, head coach of RP Cebuano Ubodlli, said Gonzales is certain to join the Filipinos first game against the Thais on Sunday.

Chef Solomon, however, said that the Filipino have enough firepower to pull Down through against the Thais.

GONZALES

Bodybuilders flex muscles, 5 gain finals

HO CHI MINH City—Filipino bodybuilders flexed their muscles yesterday as all five bets bundled the pre-judging and lunged into the finals of the 22nd Southeast Asian Games at the Ben Thanh Competition Hall.

Light middleweight Alfredo Tanseco, the 2001 Southeast Asia Bodybuilding Championships titlist, led the Filipinos' march as he crowd Down runner-Up fulfilling his promise of bagging a gold medal here.

Aside from Tanseco, who achieve big here today's finals are Ginoong Romano Gonzaga, lightweight Jose Bautista, welter Armando Villanueva and lightheavy Angelito Llana.

"Maganda ito(well, I think we have good chances)," said team manager Corina Magdo.

Apart from the 39-year-old Tanseco, seventh placer in the Busan Asian Games, Llana and Bautista, a marine engineer, were tasked to spin medal prospects.

"Each one of them is capable of winning," said Magdo. "They've prepared long and hard for this games."

The bodybuilders are returning to the SEAG after missing the last two editions and hope are to wins medal share the 1995 Chiang Mai SEAG. Ray Loarca

Judokas gun for gold again

HO CHI MINH City—What they failed to get two years ago, Antonio Lucero and Nancy Quilbero will try to obtain in the judo competitions.

Lucero, a half lightweight, and Quilbero, an extra lightweight, won both silver medalists in the Kuala Lumpur SEAG.

The 27-year-old Lucero, a criminology graduate from Xaviersupo City, will battle Laos's Sabit Lalapalady while Quilbero, a discovery from Dolay, Leyte, will battle Cambodia's Sovanneth Kimsyeun. Thursday Nhi and Vietnam's Ho Ngoc Ty. Ray Loarca

Her good looks will knock you out

By Ernesto Gonzales

HALALAD

HANOI—If she does not knock you out with her good looks, then you're sure to get floored by her kicks and blows.

Known as Ms. Filipinas Candidate No. 22 several months back, Gretchen Malalad is now in the limelight as a young bet for a South-east Asian Games gold medal in karatedo-ednch bagna here today.

The 23-year-old, 5-foot-7 standout is one of two defending champions in the 23-strong karatedo squad, and RP training consultant Romano Golpeje of Italy, a former World Cup champion, thinks she'll deliver one of three golds expected from the women's division.

She topped the 60-kg border in Philippine free sparring and proved she was no flash in the pan by seizing a bronze medal in the Asian Games in Busan, Korea last year despite a dislocated shoulder.

Gretchen, a typical Filipina beauty was drawn to 55kg and fluoroed members of 55-26-33 when she decided to try her luck in another "competition" upon the prodding of Philippine Sports Commission official Tim Orimaco.

An AB communication arts graduate from UST, Malalad had plenty of time to her hands then, having undergone surgery to repair her injured shoulder.

Barely a week after her eye was removed, she reported for the customary interview, passed it and then went throughout the usual routine of learning how to carry herself during the endless practice and photo sessions.

In the match, soto sprak Malalad turned to her sport.

During the search for the titles Yahoo award, Malalad became the runaway choice as the impressed the judges with the way she clobbered four rivals in a non-fight scrap.

"Thirteen yess," the smiled when asked how she eventually fared in the final judging.

But for this only girl in a barracks-loving family of three living in Cainta, Rizal, find by are is 13 months off her real worth as a Filipina champ.

UST faculty cheer on Pinoys

HO CHI MINH City—More than 20 faculty members of the University of Santo Tomas Institute of Physical Education and Athletics arrived here Thursday to cheer on Team Philippines to the 22nd Southeast Asian Games.

The group is headed by Dr. Emelio de Jesus. A lady faculty member said they will also observe how the Games are being conducted and visit some colleges and universities. They will proceed to Bangkok after four days to avoid more their observation tour before returning to Manila. Ray Loarca

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HO CHI MINH City—The Vietnamese are ruled football favorites. The city proudly closed all during the game between Vietnam and Indonesia Thursday night.

Even street hawkers and sales persons are glued on television sets during the match, which finally ended at 1-0 in Vietnam's favor. Motorcycles, people in cars and even those are jammed with teenagers riding their motorcycles, wearing victory headbands and blowing trumpets. The celebrations lasted well after midnight. Ray Loarca

***

HO CHI MINH City—Host Lieutenant Mike Arroyo and Philippine Sports Commission chairman Bobi Bolisay will be arriving in this bustling port city of motorcycles today. Mr. Arroyo and Bolisay will provide moral support to Filipino athletes competing in the Southeast Asian Games events slated at different venues here. They are also expected to hold a press conference and meet with members of the Filipino community here. Ray Loarca

PHILE Christa Kumos of the Philippines performs on the balance beam during the women's gymnastic team competition in the Vietnam SEA Games on Friday. –

Vietnam comes to a standstill, then erupts into a frenzy

By Ernesto Gonzales

HANOI—For Vietnam, it seems nothing beats winning the football championship.

While they are expected to figure prominently in the overall championship race as the host nation traditionally does in the Southeast Asian Games, the Vietnamese showed Thursday night that a gold in football is what they really want after all.

Surged against powerhouse Indonesia, Vietnam edged out a 3-0 win that virtually sealed its entry into the semifinals after earlier battling Thailand to a 1-1 draw.

The victory was greeted by a frenzied mass exit from local investment at the Main Press Center and soon after a wild, noisy celebration throughout the city erupted.

Screaming fans riding in vandorse on motorcycles with horns blaring waved national banners as their non-subdued raucous thundered through the major thoroughfares in a victory statement lasting until the wee hours of yesterday.

"Vietnam dongkon night," declared a headline on an article of the win that appeared in the 22nd SEA Games Express, the daily news bulletin of the event yesterday.

Football is considered a prime sport here that when Vietnam played a round fourth overall over the Philippines in Malaysia two years ago, it raised the victory in several football as "the most valuable result" among the 23 gold the country achieved.

Vietnam showed its credentials as a football power in Southeast Asia by placing second in Brunei in 1999.

And with terrific hometown support behind them, the Vietnamese may just go all the way this time.

RP chessers blitz rivals

Mendoza assured of bronze

By Ray Lauro

HO CHI MINH City—Olympian Beverly Mendoza beat compatriot and fellow Woman International Master Christine Rose Marinera, 2-0, yesterday to assure herself of at least a bronze medal in individual rapid chess competition of the 22nd Southeast Asian Games at the Van Dien Indoor Stadium here.

It was the same story in men's play as Grandmaster Joey Antonio and GM candidate Mark Paragua are also slated to face each other for the right for a semifinal slot.

The fourth-seeded Antonio and the fifth-seeded Paragua battled their respective Malaysian rivals by similar 2-0 scores.

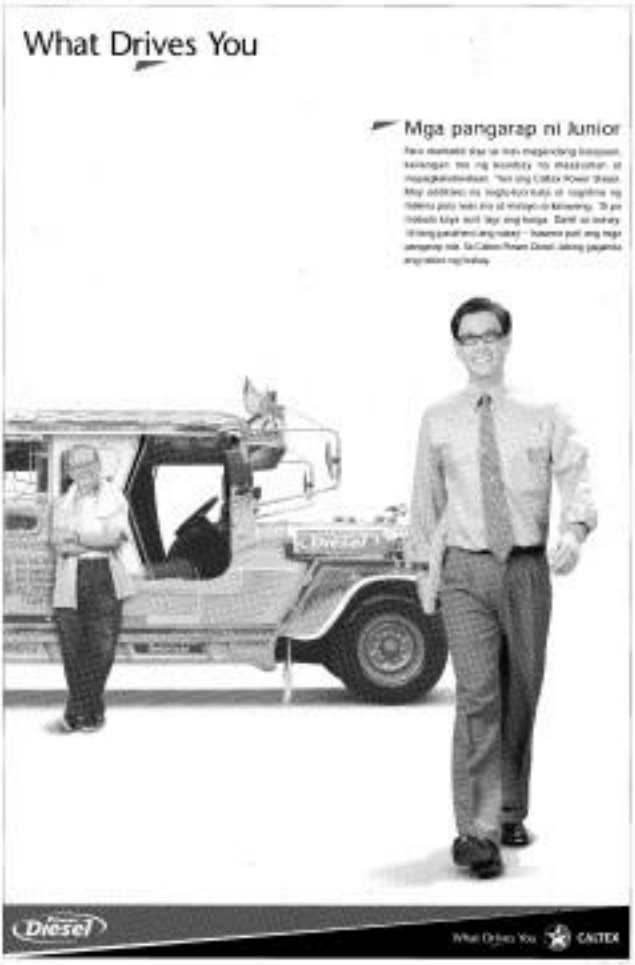
Filling in for PCSO candidate Antonio "Tic" Cardi, Mendoza showed her mettle by toppling Marinera with relative ease in Game 1 of a Centre Counter and in Game 2 of a French with Black.

The 25-year-old three-time national champion, who is seeded fourth here, will meet local bet and top seed Lu Ki Wen in today's semifinals.

It was a heartbreaking loss for Marinera, a five-time national champion, as she had beaten Hidayati Nur Sh Zulkafli via sudden death earlier in the first round.

They fought to a 1-1 draw in the first round, sealed the blitz round in another 1-1 tie before Marinera eventually won, 6-5, in the shootout.

"Sayang. We would have preferred that our players meet later," said lawyer Jimmy Pellosis, secretary general of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.



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OPINION

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Surveys

PUBLIC opinion surveys are part of the selection process of candidates to high public office—including the presidency, vice presidency and senatorship—in the Philippines. We should, therefore, expect to see more frequently the results of surveys in the run-up to the 2004 elections, and they are bound to arouse increasing interest from the public and provoke controversies over their results.

EDITORIAL In the face of the increasing importance of surveys in influencing voting behavior, the public should be warned that the most recent surveys cannot be the gauge of who will win the presidency and of how the people will vote. It is important to emphasize that a survey taken, say, last November, correctly captured the mood of the voters at that moment. Such survey is a snapshot of public opinion at the time. Voters' preference is likely to fluctuate, depending upon the issues and the uncertain turn of political and economic events. Public opinion is especially subject to fluctuations in unstable democracies like the Philippines, where democratic institutions that underpin political stability (such as political parties and conventions) play a less important role in the selection process than informal institutions like the media and even street turbulence agitated by the mobilization of mobs outside the electoral framework.

Between now and May 2004, coup rumors, another coup attempt, a major political realignment and another corruption scandal, and tremors in the markets responding to jitters caused by unsettling political events can change the public mood swiftly and shift votes toward or away from candidates who might be leading in the most recent surveys.

At this stage, the political map is still unsettled and undefined. The map could change any time before Christmas and after the New Year, during which period civil-case of candidacy are to be filed. The political opposition is deeply split into two camps, and is unlikely to have a single candidate for president, and this split is certain to at least determine whether the presidential competition is going to be a four-cornered or three-cornered fight.

Such a scenario foreshadows a tightly-contested election. None of those shown in the surveys to be serious contenders is polling ahead and breaking away from the pack and none can claim having established a momentum to touch off a bandwagon effect.

It is at this critical stage, where opinion is very much tentative and does not show any strong trend for anyone, that the public should be most wary about being deluded by results indicating the "winnability" or popularity of candidates. It is at this stage where public opinion can be hijacked by opinion polls into making choices in 2004 on the basis alone of popularity (this or that) and credentials to provide intelligent and competent leadership to a nation that is at its wits end in searching for leadership rising above the reactionary seduction of popularity.

Opinion polls have value to political institutions and strategists. They are tools they can use to fashion their tactics, giving them guideposts as to what issues to emphasize and what weaknesses of rival candidates to focus on. To political tacticians, surveys can easily be manipulated to create a bandwagon effect, although in fairness to scientifically-based polls, it is possible to say that it is far from their intention to run a survey to try to create a bandwagon effect. This is all the more reason pollsters should be cautious and not be exuberant about their results, lest they lend themselves to manipulation by self-serving partisan interests.

The downside of election public opinion polls is that they emphasize "winnability" and popularity. These two elements are not the most important criteria for electing new leaders. Polls also have a responsibility to guide voters into having intelligent and informed choices. If they put too much importance on "winnability," at the expense of giving voters a choice that gives preference to competence and merit, then pollsters are making it more difficult for voters to make informed choices rather than giving for candidates who have nothing to recommend them other than glitz. Elections are about making informed choices. They are not just a popularity contest which reduces elections to an exercise that rewards ignorance.

The police power

SEPARATE OPINION

Joaquin A. Cruz

AFTER DELIVERING a lecture on the police power, Dr. Jose P. Laurel, the constitutionalist jurist, was approached by a disturbed listener, obviously a layman, who asked with wild alarm, "Sir, are you not giving too much power to the police?" The man was apparently the counsel of the police and had protests of a corps of unthinking unarmed soldiering in a fraternal regime.

But the breadth of citizens who, like him, identify the police power with the policeman, let me make this clarification. This may be necessary to inform the passionless among us of the boring principles of police power and its assessment-mark in the modern society.

The police power is one of the inherent powers of the State, the others being the power of eminent domain and the power of taxation. It surely is the most important of the three if we consider when and to whom each of these powers applies. The power of eminent domain applies only to persons unwilling to sell their private properties that are needed for some public use. Indeed, thousands of property owners may live and die without being directly touched by this power. The power of taxation applies only to persons unwilling to pay their private properties that are needed for some public use. Indeed, thousands of property owners may live and die without being directly touched by this power. The power of taxation applies only to persons unwilling to pay their taxes and does not cover even persons who are unable to pay the assessed poll tax. Millions of our countrymen nevertheless do not directly pay a single centavo in taxes.

By contrast, the police powers regulates not only property rights but, more importantly, liberty. Moreover, it applies to all persons of all ages regardless of status, sex, religion, property or other distinctions. It operates from the womb to the tomb, and in fact even beyond the grave like laws providing for the disposition of the dead person's body and of his estate, if any. It may even pursue the citizen wherever he may be, and sometimes even the dead also, beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the State.

In between conception and dissolution, the individual is harnessed in by the police power in everything he does or owns as a member of the civil or political society. The police power legislates him as he grows up, when he studies, reaches adulthood, marries and breeds a family, builds a house, practices a profession, runs a business, enters into contracts, travels abroad, runs for public office, and engages in various other human activities, including crime.

The individual may not realize this but how he sees in public, where he may cross a street, when he may start to drive, what crimes he may validly express and what drives he may not—all these and a myriad of other acts and things he may do or own are within the ambit of the police power he embrace is virtually limitless. The person's conduct and acquisitions are subject to the demands of the police power in the dialogue of its task of regulating liberty and property for the common good.

The justification is found in the ancient Latin maxim *salus populi est suprema lex* and *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*, which call for the subordination of individual benefit to the interests of the greater number.

The police power is dynamic, our courts and most states with the inevitable result it is progressive. Once exercised, it is not deemed exhausted but may be exercised again and again as often as it may be necessary to protect and promote the general welfare. Conditions change, circumstances vary, and to every such alteration the police power must adjust. Old statutes may become outmoded even as new ideas are born, expanding or constricting the limits of the police power.

Not for all its all-encompassing in its present ambience, we should be elated that there are still areas where it may not intrude. In long as what one does or owns is not affected with public interest, it cannot be regulated or prohibited under the police power. What a person wears outside his house is subject to the laws on decency and obscenity, but he may not be punished for wearing nothing in the privacy of his own room. The police power cannot dictate the color of his library or where to put his hair or what music he should prefer. And while he may not sell his stock of rice above the statutory ceiling price, a similar restriction on a valuable painting he also owns would be unlawful because it is not a prime commodity.

Contracts that before were regarded as private transactions protected by the impairment clause have yielded to the intrusive workload social legislation such as those providing for minimum wages and compulsory hours for laborers, while valid at the time of their conclusion, they may be changed by the police power in the light of changed conditions. And the police power continues to broaden or diminish as liberty becomes more assertive and private property becomes increasingly linked to the public interest.

Properly exercised, the police power can be an effective instrument for the furtherance of the people's welfare. There is in fact no better way in promoting the greatest good for the greatest number in the free society than it must be wielded with wisdom, fairness and respectful restraint lest it degenerate into a bludgeon for suppression of the diminished people.

Fiscal irresponsibility

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

THE PRESIDENT of an taxes for cigarettes and alcoholic beverages) relegated to the legislative chamber once again. The VAT on tourism and oil and electricity remained.

All these actions, actual or intended, have serious negative economic, social and political consequences: reduction in government revenue, resulting in larger budget deficits or concessions on government expenditure, or equity-promoting programs; unequal treatment of, and distorted incentives among taxpayers, e.g., wage and salaried taxpayers bearing the brunt of the tax burden; structural messages which the country can ill afford, e.g., it pays to evade taxes, breaking the law is no big deal.

Despite these implications, Congress has seen fit to undertake them, which indicates either that the issues are very low, or that the irresponsibility burdening our gross negligence is worst on the part of some of our legislators. There is no reason for such behavior, especially since they regularly complain about the size of the government's budget deficit.

Take, for example, the slashing of the excise taxes of cigarettes. If one recalls well, these taxes were changed in 1997 from a percentage of the value of the product (an ad valorem tax) to a fixed sum per unit of product (a specific tax) as a part of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program. The law, however, left out one very important provision that the Department of Finance wanted: that the amount of specific tax be automatically increased every time the inflation rate to ensure that the real value of the specific tax revenues would not be eroded.

Congress insisted that automaticity was out; they needed our flexibility, because it would give the executive the power to tax. Congress itself would see to the indexing. Famous last words.

Between 1997 and 2003, the inflation rate, per the Consumer Price Index, was 46 percent. But tobacco products it was 16 percent, and for beverages, it was 41 percent. But those averages hide wide disparities. A pack of Lucky Strike Champion cigarettes, for example could be bought at ₱5.10 in 1997, and now goes for ₱11.70, an increase of 119 percent.

Did Congress raise the specific tax on these "sin" products commensurately? In 2000, it raised the specific tax by 12 percent (inflation rate for tobacco was 17 percent at the time), and not since then. The attempt to raise it for the last two years doubled, which means that for at least another year, no tax revenues is to all seems will continue to fall.

This, the country cannot afford, but Congress knows this.

If the country is losing, who gains? Certainly, among the direct beneficiaries of Congress' sensible behavior would be Tan's cigarette companies—and brewery not to mention Danding Cojuangco's San Miguel. One can only speculate what form their gratitude may take in the coming elections.

Those who file taxes to exempt doctors and lawyers from the 10 percent Value-Added Tax imposed on professionals. Why were doctors exempted? Since the it would hurt the poor argument for imposing the VAT on doctors does not hold water, the reason given me by both Ways-Means Secretary Lito Camacho and Sen. Ralph Recto (the bill's author) was that other countries exempt doctors from VAT. That may be the case (there are exemptions, I understand, like New Zealand), but what is overlooked in this argument is that the doctors in developed countries also happen to be, perforce, conscientious taxpayers. Which is not the case here. Imposing VAT on them will certainly be one way of making up for the revenue loss.

If the reasons for exempting doctors is revenue, exempting lawyers has no basis at all. That it was done is a demonstration of brazen, in-your-face political muscle-wielding by our legislators, many of whom are lawyers. Which leaves only the accountants and entertainers to pay the VAT imposed on professionals. So now we have the unfair situation where lowincome taxpayers pay VAT on their purchases of VAT but not, if they're at all, have their own doctors and lawyers. By the way, a 2000 study shows that the average gross tax rate (income taxes paid divided by gross income) of professionals in the over ₱500,000-a-year income category who are wage and salaried was already less than 10 percent. The comparable rate for professionals who are self-employed is less than 5 percent.

And then there is the issue, supposedly initiated by the House leadership, to declare a tax amnesty. To paraphrase one writer, this is akin to telling a kidnapper, OK, you can keep your ransom, but please don't do it again. Illegal actions are condoned, and those who pay their legal taxes are in effect taxed more. The wrong message. And the wrong incentives.

Unfortunately, I have yet to hear a word from any of our presidential candidates on these issues. Why? Do they expect Danding to lose kindly one's hefty campaign contribution, or have finally seen how toward them, one would hazard the guess that they have much weightier things on their mind, or that they are clueless, or that they are keeping their silence because they don't want to step on the toes of actual or potential campaign contributors. Equally unfortunately, media, supposedly our watchdog, are similarly forsaken them, and much more attention either, judging from the dearth of column inches of newspaper space and the radio and TV time devoted to the matter, as compared to the amount devoted to, say, the Ates Amy break up.

Nobody's minding the store, folks.

Criminality worldwide

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

HOR weeks, President Macapagal-Arroyo was obviously torn between equally passionate but opposing sides on the death penalty issue. In fact, what she went through reminded me of the 90s' double-dare issues of quadrivalent, whereby the citizen's conveniences were tied to an almost unwilling to different directions, ending in his dismemberment. I had hoped she'd stick to her earlier decision to freeze the death penalty, but obviously she has caved in to pressure from many quarters, including ordinary citizens who want more decisive action against criminality. In fact, I read that the executive department has already drawn up guidelines where a number of prominent generals, including former National Capital Region chief, Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, were redeployed, were part of the renewed anti-crime campaign. Understandably, the President was being influenced on both sides and by forces she HOR with head held high. But I surmise that GMA needed a fresh approach since she promised a "balanced" Christmas. "What some PDP-Laban, cronies, however, have to say about the new directive is entirely without the purview. Even Interior Secretary Jesse Lina was cued to have known about it only after reading a press release. This was demoralizing.

* * *

Rep. Etta Rosales, chair of the House committee on human rights, has said that anti-death penalty advocates would work for the repeal of the law. That is the step in the right direction. The death penalty law was railroaded by Congress and only that body can repeal it.

There will be an outcry from groups opposing the death penalty, including church leaders, but to the moment, more emotive are for reviving it, and it's hard to argue with them about that. They have rights of criminals. The same is true of the national identification card. I suppose you can't argue with many citizens about its enormous potential for human rights abuse when what they see is that it will help weed out the criminals.

* * *

There seems to be a fresh wave of criminality here, but the trend appears to be worldwide. The Filipino dread of a giant multinational electronics firm appearing here only to find that the Philippine counterpart was also complaining that criminality is quite bad in Kuala Lumpur. The KL executive's house was broken into no less than five times over a recent months. One time his wife and 15-year-old daughter were held hostage in their home while the criminals trashed the beauty of the latter. One difference is that in Malaysia those crimes don't land on the front page or at the top of radio TV news.

In Manila, Spain's capital, the crime concern is not so good either. My husband's group joined a trade mission to that country a few weeks back, recounted that our friend Tony Samsoniano, a staff member of the Philippine Embassy, was crashed up on 3 p.m. right in the heart of Madrid's Luxury District. He did his utmost to save his wife from a piece of cloth soaked in chloroform over her face and robbed him of everything, including his passport (belonging to Tony). The embassy staff members were rescued by Ambassador Luis Bermudez in time to see their assailants arrive at Madrid, where was unthinkable a few years back.

My US-based brother Roger came out of a big department store also in Madrid with two bottles of brandy for purchases who he'd been to meet and to him and tried to grab both the brandy and his wallet. Roger fought back and made a lot of noise that frightened them.

On a visit to Madrid last year, my good friends, retired professors Bruce and Susan Evangelista, were accosted by several thugs near the door to their hotel which they chose precisely for its "good location." The thugs grabbed them by the neck and bashed them to the ground and tried to rob them, but they screamed so loud that the thugs let them go before help came.

* * *

It's difficult to see how the opposition can unite behind a single candidate, after the anti-execution exchanges between two factions of the LDP (Ito Lacson faction criticized another faction, Velgardo Angara for being "dictatorial" in "saving" PIV down the party's throat without due process. Angara called that faction's declaration of Lacson as its candidate "unauthorized."

Then there's Nacionalista Party's reported recruitment of Mamasapano, President Macapagal-Arroyo is withholding her hold on Lakas by encouraging its own members, or forging alliances with political hotpots from other parties. Among those suggested are Governor Vilma Santos-Recto, Mayor Edward Hagedorn, whose enthusiasm extends beyond his city, and Cagayan de Oro Mayor Vicente Emano and the city's lone member of the House, Constantino Jaraula.

* * *

The Manila Critics Circle, in cooperation with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the National Development Board, recently declared the 10 volumes of "Selected Literatures of Southeast Asia" as the winner of the 2002 National Book Awards for History and Essay. Subsequently, the Ateneo University has been commissioned to launch of this book's publishers, the 2000 Foundation, Inc. and the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus. Papers of appreciation were presented to the publishers, as well as to Luis Teodoro Jr., 2000 Foundation president, and Dr. Isabelo M. Pascua, who compiled and edited the books. Dean Estrella Fantos of the Ateneo's Humanities Department has announced that the unveiling and blessing of the 10-shelf statue of Fr. Jose Cecilio Guerrero, SJ, at the De La Salle Hall will be held on Dec. 10 at 6 p.m., to be presided by Fr. Ramon Echeverria, Jesuit provincial. The statue was commissioned by Ateneo High School Class '52.

Brazen and wrong

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IS RESPONSE to a full-page ad, signed by concerned citizens, demanding to know where the budget allocation for the purchase of contraceptives has gone, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit called a press conference to "spill the beans" on where the money went.

Dayrit admitted that the DOH indeed diverted P65-million from the P267 million stand appropriation for contraceptives—such as pills, IUDs, condoms, injectables—against those of family drugs, like asthma medicines, antibiotics and antipsychotic medicines. But the reason for the diversion was to buy contraceptives while their health, if not lives, are dependent on the drugs.

But it's a tactic rejected by the ad's signatories. "Contraceptives are no less vital to the health of women than medicines for asthma, diabetes, mentality like maternal drugs, vaccines and life-saving medicines," they said in a statement. "It is a serious matter that leading economists have consistently cited the money poured into family planning as one of the most cost-effective investments: 45 percent of the cost of the national family planning program and the national government contribution only eight percent, it is wrong for lawmakers [and] to divert public funds for the DOH's health programs. Family planning supplies could be used to ease the burden of the already-overstressed public health system."

What Dayrit fails to realize—though as a health professional he ought to know better—is that family planning is a health necessity as much as supplying vital maternal preparations. It's a choice to the health and survival of women and their children. Not only are children born to mothers at high risk smaller and weaker, they are also more likely to survive childhood—if they're born because the family's meager resources will be stretched even thinner.

* * *

DAYRIT'S brazen defiance is even more astonishing considering the current situation. In the "expression of protest" points out: "Secretary Dayrit has refused to use available public funds, his prerogative, to purchase the drugs, unless the donated supply of the commodity will be insufficient for the total needs of expected users of these methods. His action will harm many women who depend on government for their family planning supplies."

The signatories include former Health Secretary Alberto Romualdez (now president of the Family Care Foundation), Aurora Wayan Gia of the Foundation for Adolescent Development, Fides Bautista-Lopez of the PhilOC, Fabros to idea of the PhilPO, and Maria Sagrario, a former health undersecretary.

The lack or absence of contraceptives in government facilities may not be a big deal for women and couples who can afford to buy their own family planning supplies, they say. "But for millions of poorer Filipinos, the nonavailability of free contraceptives in the public service will mean either an added burden to withdraw from buying supplies to be available for free or the loss of the means to freely practice a family planning method of choice."

In the choice for Filipino women, then, or else to risk dangers into poverty or to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term, the new child will most likely result in the family getting mired even deeper in poverty, with little prospect of rising above their circumstances.

Fourth, Dayrit realizes that diverting money from family planning is not saving lives; it will in fact promote more abortions, more maternal deaths, more children dying needless than they should.

* * *

IN THE SAME press conference, Dayrit admitted that the DOH had obtained P68 million this year on a joint family planning program with the Catholic group Couples for Christ.

I presume the program with CFC is in pursuit of the Macapagal administration's policy of "responsible parenthood through natural family planning," the only method that's approved by the Catholic Church for use by Catholic couples.

Aiming aside for now questions on the real efficacy and reliability of NFP as a family planning method, especially for those who, it's said, is pregnant, there's something disturbing about the disbursement of couples for Christ as the only partner of government in disseminating information on the method.

Not to question the legality and wisdom of DOH allowing government resources and public funds to be accessed preferentially by a private and religious group like the Couples for Christ," says the statement.

"We appreciate the need to improve access to natural family planning or other methods sanctioned by the Catholic Church, among the dozen of methods available to Filipinos. In the light, however, of Secretary Dayrit's refusal to use public funds to purchase contraceptives, such support to some methods but not others indicates the resolution of the DOH to endorse, even as what is effectively a form of coercion of Filipino women to adopt the methods favored by the Catholic Church instead of being informed and supported to make other choices."

* * *

THE DICTUM of "separation of Church and State" means that government should not favor one religion or Church over others. By choosing to work only with CFC, is not Dayrit and the entire government guilty of violating this principle?

How will CFC counselors motivate couples to use NFP? By telling scientific reasons, or listing their exhortations on faith? Since when have we adopted a state religion?

Christmas customs and traditions

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ramón L. Harper

IT'S that time of year again when we begin to hear moans and groans about the overuse (otherwise commercialization) of Christmas and how it has become. How often have we heard it said that the meaning of Christmas has been lost in all that shopping, wrapping and party-going and -going. Or that's not to be strange things that we should consider "giving," whether in the form of presents or monetary gifts, only during this time.)

Truth is, how many of us really know what it was like then except as children when we weren't involved in the mechanics of the holidays?

The Christmas celebration, as we have come to know it, has many Western traditions that have become part of our own, a no way as old as our way before. Apparently, it has only been in the past 200 years that Christmas has been celebrated the way we know it. I have been told, for one, that the custom of gifts, before World War II in Manila, anyone wanted to be done on Jan. 1, the feast of the Three Kings, and that the focus was on the "Belen" and not on the Christmas Tree the way it is today. The emphasis on Belenes, Simbang and Misa de Gallo was also more pronounced than it is now, more a Spanish/Latin tradition than American. Since the Church has further de-emphasized the Three Kings so that Jan. 6 is no longer a holiday of obligation, our celebration will continue to be influenced more by American customs.

Even the Christmas celebration, basically a pagan celebration. It seems that in both the United States and the United Kingdom, Christmas was a time of putting roasting break, singing bawdy songs and caroling to the streets. It was not a holy day, but a day of excess, when the poor would storm the houses of the rich and demand food and drink. If the owners did not respond, they would break into the houses and take what they wanted.

That type of celebration harkened back to the Saturnalia, when the Romans celebrated the winter solstice with a celebration of self indulgence: the feast of

From politicians to statesmen

ACCORDING to the dictionary, a statesman is one who is wise and skilful in conducting state affairs and treating public issues or one experienced in the business of government.

This is why in the Greek and Roman times, only learned men, not in the former vs.-diverse public issues.

Corruption and corporations were unheard of. Corporations did not meddle with politicians, did not influence legislation and did not give money to political parties.

In the United States, before 1886, there were laws that prevented corporations from meddling in politics.

According to records (Reader's Digest, January 2003), Wisconsin State had a law that stated no corporations doing business in this state shall pay or contribute or offer consent or agree to pay or contribute, directly or indirectly, any money, property, free service of its officers or employees or thing of value to any political party, organization, committee or individual for any political purpose whatsoever, or for the purpose of influencing legislation of any kind, or to promote or defeat the candidacy of any person for nomination, appointment or election to any political office.

The penalty for any corporate official violating that law and getting cozy with politicians on behalf of a corporation was five years in prison and a substantial fine!

Today, however, free speech is a human right and individuals are free to say and do what they want.

Corporations do not only have rights, they also have privileges!

It is not for the government to be in the pocket of anyone.

As Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said: 'Where corruption is openly accepted as a way of life, no country can development prosper.

While some politicians believe and support corporations engaged in genetic technology of food, the statesman knows that genes do not 'mutate' in nature but rather within the context of the genome, the organism and the environment.

If a chemical does not have any effect on a rat, it is stupid to deduct that the chemical does not have any effect on man. A rat is not a man.

The most bizarre excuses of corporations is the Cosmic Miasm, the spacecraft that will explore the planetary system.

According to newspaper reports, it carries with it 72.3 pounds of plutonium—238, one pound of which could hypothetically cause lung cancer in every person on earth!

The ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras said later Plato, introduced the principle of examination and spiritual initiation into the government of the state, intelligence and virtue are the basis of governance.

As Thoits the Greats, author, said: Pit many first get corporations out of government so politicians can once again be statesmen.

Albert Einstein once said the world is a dangerous place to live in, not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.

Now, the ball is in your hands.

'What will you do in 2004?'

—LEONARDO S. CAMACHO
nonnieleonard@...
Unwan Philippines,
2 El Regency Park,
207 Amvisan Rd., QC

LETTERS

Bulacan bought only 39 vehicles

THIS is to clarify some points raised in the column of Inday Cruz titled, 'Trax buying vehicles for public officials,' (PDI, 11/13/03).

There are always two sides to a story.

1. The province of Bulacan does not have a set plan for its board members and other senior provincial officials. Vehicles that have been purchased by the province that are assigned to department heads remain as government property and are strictly for official use only. These are not luxury vehicles. Its board members or committees (who are not provincial officials but are municipal) are assigned service vehicles at all.

2. As to the number of vehicles purchased, please be informed that from January 2001 to November 2003, only a total of 39 vehicles were purchased by the province, 13 of them from June to August. This has been the policy of the Bulacan PNP for its peace and order campaign, two ambulances and 11 for various departments of the provincial government. The provincial government did not buy 53 vehicles as claimed by Cruz.

3. True, the vehicles were bought from Freeway Motors because they are the dealership is controlled by the Ee la Cruz family so Cruz would like to convey but because the terms offered by Freeway Motors were very advantageous to the government.

As to the ownership of the corporation, records provided by the Securities and Exchange Commission show that although Josefito Mendoza was an original incorporator of Freeway Motors, he divested his shares to the company on Sept. 22, 2000, a fact which was duly recorded with the SEC. The Mendoza family therefore does not own a single share of the corporation nor did they in 2002 as the family. All these are recorded in the stockholder book of the company, which can be made available to anyone. It is obvious that the informant of Cruz did not do a thorough research.

Lastly, we have good respect for the Cruz family, but we wish that Cruz took the time to call our office to get our side of the story first. It would have saved both parties a lot of unnecessary trouble as a result of the inaccurate story.

—MA. CECILIA S. TIGCHE
head, Provincial Public Affairs Office, Bulacan Provincial Capitol Bldg., Bulacan City, Bulacan

Bring RP troops home now

PRESIDENT Gloriapagal Arroyo said she will pull out the Philippine contingent of troops and humanitarian workers she sent to Iraq if the situation in their sector is worsens.

I have no idea what this means. The threat is there. The only way it can get worse is if our contingent gets hit. By then it would be too late. Leave it now!

The United Nations, the Red Cross, the British, the Americans, the Polish and the Italian contingents have already left Iraq. The UN and Red Cross have, in fact, already withdrawn following the devastating attacks on their headquarters. The Japanese have seen the peril of sending troops and so have decided to refrain from doing so now.

More evidently, the United States has already shifted position and has decided to give the Iraqis self-government by mid-2004. The United States has come to realize that the situation cannot and will not improve. American troops are getting killed on an average of one a day.

Madame President, please bring home our countrymen now and let them celebrate Christmas with their loved ones. Any tragedy that may befall them will be on your conscience the moment you die. And all human souls have concern and is decisive the United States, especially with the forthcoming 2004 election!

—REYNALDO G. AVILLA,
rnavi@i-manila.com.ph

Defective selection process for top AFP posts

RAMOS Bayden's column, 'Who now commands the Philippine Army,' PDI, 11/19/03) discussed a defective selection process for AFP key posts that gives weight to patronage and so-called 'public perception' of the contenders instead of their total worth in the service.

In his explanation of my being 'out of the race for CG, SC he conveniently overlooked the Lumiran incident without citing that the AFP inspector general had cleared me of all charges. The Ombudsman did not even focus on my service separation (which has remained intact despite the well-orchestrated demolition job that dogged me ever since some 'self-proclaimed kingmakers' saw me as a threat to the personal ambitions of their protégés). Mrs. Ombudsman, to pinpoint on the two successive promotions I received after the legislative hearings. My second star in late 2001, and the third in July this year. Confirmation of these promotions breezed through the Commission on Appointments whose members come from both chambers, the same bodies that conducted separate hearings on the Lumiran incident. Such confirmations would have not been possible had Lumiran weighed down my credentials.

Further, a retired general and a former PAF chief, also ignored career profiles of the 'contenders,' although 201 are public documents. A quick scan would show the disparity in the qualifications of these contenders for the position and explain my being the top contender. The hint on 'trust' as basis is dangerous; it undermines every soldier's loyalty to the flag. Whom one is involved as 'loyal to trust,' could it mean he is less professional? It questions the very essence of soldiery.

What will now prevent junior officers from avoiding assignments in far-flung areas and to start cultivating those ties with living politicians while enjoying comfortable assignments, confident that required 'killers can anyway be fast-tracked?

It seems that the wisest selection that the good general described resulted in what could be perceived as an irrational decision, but the good soldier that I am, I hold it to respect the professional in me believes in working harder as the best revenge against such an injustice.

—LT.GEN. ROMEO S. ORIENTE, (Ret.),
chief, Southern Luzon Command, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City

Across the NATION

Cebu-based Koreans offer ₱1M for killers of countrymen

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Philippine Star/cebu

CEBU CITY—The South Korean community in Cebu has offered P1 million in cash reward for information that will lead to the arrest of the assailants of the two Korean businessmen ambushed last Saturday in Lapulapu City.

The Cebu Korean Association, headed by Mr. Moon Bock, has initially announced the cash reward Thursday afternoon in a meeting among Korean employers in Cebu held at Shalita Studio Bar Restaurant, which was owned by the late Mr. Hong in Lapulapu City.

The money will be given to those who can give information that would lead to the arrest of the gunmen and mastermind in the ambush and killing of Che Woo Sik and Kim Sok Shin, both 32, On May 29 in Marigondon, Lapulapu City.

Both said the amount would also be willing to donate rebates to the police for their service upon arrest.

President Rhinapugdi Aarvan has offered a reward for those who can give information that will solve the killings of the two Koreans.

Reynaldo Fernandez, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) director for Central Visayas, said the task created would help speed up the investigation but until yesterday he said, they have no suspect in jail.

Fernandez clarified the earlier report of his office that they are looking into the possibility that murder Koreas was involved in the case.

Fernandez said they have no evidence against the Koreas.

Fernandez said his men were still trying to get witnesses who could describe the killers.

189 Japan-donated computers stolen in Pampanga, Tarlac

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—At least 189 Central Pampanga Units (CPUs) of computers donated by the Japanese government were stolen from 11 public high schools in Pampanga and Tarlac since June last year, depriving 2,300 students of training in information technology, according to officials.

Rhonida Lamsayson, Central Luzon director of the Department of Trade and Industry, the lead agency in the "PCs for Public School Project," said the Philippine National Police has not yet solved any of the theft cases so far.

The latest theft incident occurred at the San Carlos High School in San Luis town early this week. Twenty CPUs given to a group from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) were taken by still unidentified suspects, village and school officials said.

The latest theft brought to 60 the number of CPUs stolen from the Arau, Del Carmen, Bulacan and San Juan high schools in Mexico, Lubao, Magalang and San Luis towns in Pampanga province.

In Tarlac, a report of the study department said 600 more were 101 CPUs in the Mendiola Aguas, Maliabanbas, Asturo, San Miguel, Guevarra and Balaoa high schools in Tarlac City and public schools in San Jose, Gerona, San Manuel, La Paz and Concepcion towns.

Lamsayson said Jica-style security and installation of prison mail detectors have been urged to tighten the security in the school premises to prevent future thefts of computers in computer parks.

About 6,000 years students in public schools use the computers in their technology and home economics classes. Without the equipment, teachers have been giving lessons relying only on visual aids without the students getting any hands-on training in the use of computers.

The teachers would also oversee other subjects such as theories in plant or computer science to the classes of working computers.

The SGA for Public School Project, created late year, completed the computer programs of the Department of Education and Department of Science and Technology that was able to install 1,134 of 3,500 public high schools nationwide, a scale department report said.

The project's one year computer education curriculum, made pursuant to Executive Order No. 39, provides students basic lessons on software applications like word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software, Internet use, basic programming and diagnostic and troubleshooting general software and hardware problems.

Lamsayson said Jicas approved the grant in line with the objectives of its comprehensive cooperation package addressing international digital divide in the mobility of poor countries to upgrade IT capacities because of lack of equipment.

The package was announced during the Ryutiro Hashimoto Summit.

In the project, read Philippines provided free transport training for teachers while Microsoft Philippines gave a software assistance package. Beatrice Oreiza, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 Isabela prisoners bolt jail, kill guard

ILIGAN, Isabela—Two prisoners of the Isabela provincial jail stabbed and shot dead their guard-escort in Luna el. Lagi town before escaping on Thursday, local and police officials said.

Major Bonito Calderon identified the escapees as Augusto Vilasco and Lucinio Bulilad. Alvin de Guzman, provincial jail guard, died from a stab wound and five bullet wounds. He died on the spot.

Calderon said the escape would serve as a lesson to jail guards who, out of overconfidence and negligence, would allow their prisoners to move freely.

Jail records said Vilasco, 30, a facing charges of illegal drugs and illegal possession of firearms, Bulilad, on the other hand, is facing rape charges.

Gilbert Hoyo-a Jr., *PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Masbate cop chief says probe of radio man's slaying to be broader

LEGAZPI CITY—The chief of police of Masbate province expressed skepticism that radio man Wilson Wallace may have been slain because of his newscasts on six of the province's four radio stations.

Senior Supt. Romeo Magalong said he is inclined to believe that Wallace's killer or killers were motivated to have him killed.

"What we are looking at is that case are the people also he had hit—politicians," a former Governor official and town officials of the LDP(?)," said Magalong.

"I'm latest attack was against the controversial P240 million loan of the provincial government with the Land Bank which backers said were very beneficial. President ... gov. members turn around," said the police chief.

Magalong said he believes that one of the policemen hit by Wallace might have wanted revenge to silence Wallace. "The problem here is very sensitive. Most police and bodyguards and we are looking at all those angles," said Magalong.

He said an army investigator have identified the suspects, all they have to do is conduct operation final step.

Wallace had been a block time commentator in Masbate's four radio stations (MBC since 2001).

His wife Wilma pleaded to Task Force Wallace to investigate all angles in the killing and not focus on but bring closure hunting to the New People's Army.

Wallace was shot dead by two men after he stepped out on Dec. 2.

Hunting his colleagues' case at Wallace's radio station in Sinamagay, Mobo, Masbate, Wilma cried out for justice for her husband.

Wilma also disclosed that her husband was getting death threats through text messages.

The first message, she said, was received last Nov. 30, and the last one was about two days before his killing.

Wallace's family is hoping a hard time trying to recall the exact content of the text messages as they said no longer have the cellular phone after his killing.

But the family said the message that did not come from the NPA, by their appeal to investigators, Wallace's family appealed for swift justice for the slain radio man.

Ebong Dorino, dyRR station-in-charge, supported Wallace's widow in her appeal for authorities to investigate all possible angles and motives for the killing.

She said she believed that Wallace's killing is related to his work as a broadcaster since he regularly attacked various personalities and agencies as part of the documentary programs's format.

"As a block timer, Ka Nelson usually assumes a lot of personalities, not only government officials and politicians, but even the military," she said in an interview with the long time.

Magalong had created hunting the investigators to run angle since. He said they have already created a task force composed of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, the Masbate PNP Crime Laboratory, and the regional intelligence office. Ronnie Lanuza, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Poll execs note hike in number of new voters

SURIGAO CITY —Election officials in Surigao Del Norte announced an increase in the number of new voters who turned up during the general registration Aug. 18 to Dec. 6.

Based on a report from election field officials, provincial poll supervisor Rogelio Despuesa said the number of registrants in the province's five cities and 20 municipalities increased by 10 percent of 17 to 18 percent.

He said they were surprised by the turnout because based on his experience, only 5 percent of new voters were expected to be added to the previous number of voters.

Comelec regional director Antonio Bendaniza of Tacloban City, in a period since 127,000 new voters. He said it was more surprising because prior to the year's general registration, the Comelec conducted a continuing registration of voters.

Besides, he added there are also a general registration during the barangay elections in 2002.

Bendaniza said most localities were registered more than a 20 percent increase in new voters. Betsy Aquino-de, *Philippine Star news*

Church backs anti-logging prosecutor

PAGADIAN CITY—The Claver bishops and 95 priests of Region Occidental have appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to withdraw the "unjust" removal of Reginal Rabe as the city prosecutor handling the illegal logging case filed against a town mayor and 10 others here.

Bishops Vicente Navarro of Ipil, Romulo Ramos of Isabela, Antonio Ramos of Kidapawan and Jose Advincula of San Carlos said that they were asking the President to intervene "not only for our common good environment but for our collectively threatened justice system."

Rabe has been handling the preliminary investigation of a case filed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) against Sen. Salvador Escudero, Mayor Gaudencio de la Cruz, his brother, Heherson, and 17 others for the cutting of century-old trees in the town's forest reserve.

Rabe was about to hand down his resolution on the complaint when he was relieved replaced by Justice Secretary Hernani Datumanong.

The bishops said priests, in a joint statement, said they view the dichotomy of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to replace Rabe as "grossly one-sided, unfair, unjustifiable and an abuse of the DOJ Secretary's executive prerogatives."

Datumanong designated Assistant City Prosecutor Jovan Ordizcelo of the Dipolog City Prosecutors Office to replace Rabe.

The DOJ charged De la Cruz and 18 others in September last year with violating the Forestry Code for illegally cutting 130,546 cubic meters of naturally-grown trees worth P1,060,576 located within the 23.9-hectare Mediterranean Forest Reserve in Dao Sibalo Boundless, 42 km east of Dipolog.

The complaint claimed that the De la Cruz couple allegedly ordered the cutting of trees in the forest area from 1993 to 2002.

The Claver officials said Datumanong's order contravened an order of Regional Trial Court Judge Ramon Delariarte Jr. Sept. 23 denying a motion by De la Cruz group to have Rabe removed as prosecutor of their case for "lack of merit."

Ferdie Gesmo, PDI Visayas Bureau

HOLIDAY FEST
'Parol' vendor display Christmas lanterns hoping sun and its harvest vendor on Pangan Street in Davao City takes a break before buyers start flocking just in the clock ticks for the holidays.

PHOTO BY EDDIE MESINA/PDI

CENTRAL MINDANAO'S OLDEST

₱20M set aside for Cotabato Airport runway repair

COTABATO CITY—The Department of Transportation and Communication has set aside a ₱20 million budget for the urgent rehabilitation and repair of Central Mindanao's oldest yet most substandard airport.

Jovner Virgilio Leyretana, deputy presidential assistant for Mindanao, said Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza has told President Macapagal-Arroyo during the inauguration of the Davao International Airport Monday that the 50-year-old Awang Airport runway in Maguindanao would be rehabilitated within six months.

"It was confirmed by the President," Leyretana told the reporters.

The growing concern voiced by residents, local officials and business leaders over the danger posed by the 1,875-meter long runway to airline commuters "has prompted us to appeal to ... President Macapagal for the immediate rehabilitation of the facility due to its deplorable state," Leyretana said.

Short

The runway, which is short of about 300 meters, could not accommodate international flights.

Savings funding has been set aside for the rehabilitation of the airport but due to lack of government concern, the funding was called off, it was learned, and the government counterpart to the budget was instead used for the development and rehabilitation of other airports in Mindanao.

The refurnished runway has propelled business establishments, like the Mindanao Textile Corp. (Mintex), to ship cargo by Manila via the Davao International Airport, a route that would cost as one for the business firm.

Quoting a report from the textile firm, Leyretana said Mintex has transported some 15,000 cartons of dry goods worth more P1.52 million in 11 land shuttles for Davao from January to September this year.

Calling it an indispensible component of the economic development of Central Mindanao, Leyretana said the airport is among the major sources of revenues for Maguindanao and the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Cotabato City Mayor Muslim Sema, who also chairs the Regional Development Council, has been pushing for the repair of the runway that has deteriorated through the years.

Cancelled flights

On several occasions, Philippine Airlines flights have been called off for months due to the deplorable situation of the runway.

The airport rehabilitation enhances diplomatic relations with the Organization of the Islamic Conference with Cotabato City being the temporary seat of government of ARMM.

The Awang Airport, also known as Cotabato airport, is serving Cotabato province, Maguindanao and Cotabato City.

Other flies favored flights City Cotabato airport is the most entry point of air travel for the ARMM and General Mindanao.

Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

NPA rebels killed, Army soldier wounded in clash

DUMAGUETE CITY—An undetermined number of suspected New People's Army rebels were killed and an Army soldier was wounded Friday in a gunfight that broke out in Guinsa River, Sitanggay Municipal, Visitor, a town some 50 km south of here, since around 9:30 p.m. Thursday.

Region Oriental Gen. Eduardo Ano, quoting Lt. Col. Fay Gumtotos, commanding officer of the Army's 61st Infantry Battalion, said the government casualties but suffered one injury, only but a still unidentified soldier was wounded in the clash.

Gumtotos also told the governor that "many" NPA rebels were reportedly killed in the clash.

Ano said the government troops were conducting a night patrol when they clashed upon the undetermined number of NPA rebels, reportedly headed by Raul Villar, alias Ka Bellos, in Guinsa River.

Ka Bellos was a former cadre of the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPA-ABB) who rejoined the NPA following his alleged involvement in the robbery and killing of four government employees of Sta. Catalina, in Bayawan City, some 104 km south of here, more than a year ago.

Army said since then Bellos, with a band of NPA rebels from Bohol, Leyte, Samar and Cebu, began operating in the hinterland villages of the southern part of Negros Oriental, especially in the towns of Zamora and Sta. Catalina.

As of noon Friday Ano said the government soldiers continued pursuing the rebels, who were bringing with them their wounded or dead comrades.

Jhong Amorado, PDI Visayas Bureau

Mizuno-DHL virtual Fil-Am golf champ

By Al S. Mendoza

BAGUIO CITY—A reversal of roles is in the works, with Mizuno-DHL emerging yesterday as the virtual winner of the inaugural overseas leg of the Fil-Am Golf Invitational here.

Mizuno-DHL appeared ready to wrap up its three-day overseas championship today after finishing second Iwin-behind four-time defending champion GAINorthwoods to 2000 and 2001).

But Mizuno-DHL looked set to lose its Six Division championship to GAINorthwoods, to retain the last two seats, in the tournament presented by Smart Communications and sponsored by Northwest Airlines and Royal Caribbean International.

Romeo Jamela fired a 2-under-par equivalent of 70 points at Camp John Hay yesterday to fortify Mizuno-DHL's solitary lead for the second overseas after struggling for two days with mediocre scores at Baguio Country Club.

Jamela got support from Paul Milbert, who had 36, Erwin Nielsen 35 and Eric Tolentino 33 for Mizuno-DHL for three-day total of 206.

The 1-0 yesterday by Mizuno-DHL was 3 points up on GAINorthwoods, which assembled 206 on the 40 points of Jerome Dickerson, 25 of Tim Tolentino, 35 by Mark Lopez and 20 of either Antonio Rivolcalsa or Ernie Bondoc for 206.

"We will start along in the 18 division and will be hopeful we could still make a sweep of both division championships," said Lowell Lagoy, the 26-year-old Mizuno-DHL president who is captain of Mizuno-DHL.

But it will take a miracle of gargantuan proportions for Mizuno-DHL to come in as Six Division championship as it trailed GAINorthwoods by a huge 25 points, 399-368, as the series close plays. I point to a bogey 2 to a birdie and 3 to a hole-in-one in the three-to-play four-to-score format.

GAINorthwoods scored 152 in the completion of its three-round round at Camp John Hay and then made 129 at Baguio Country Club to outshoot a 2-point deficit into a formidable 21-point margin over Mizuno-DHL going to today's final round.

"It was a tossing day for all of us in the Six Division," said Jaime Hechanova of GAINNorthwoods.

Eighteen-year-old Michael Sibal led GAINorthwoods with 35 points, and Ace Jon Flores added 32. Hermie Sr. Jr. 31 and Jesse Recto 28.

Mizuno-DHL closed out after scoring high at Camp John Hay with 158 and 156, crashing to 105 at Baguio Country Club to virtually lose grip of its Six Division championship.

Lawrence Negrillo, going 3-under the first two days at Camp John Hay, went 9-over with 26 points as BCC to share top scoring honors with Jimmy Feliciano for Mizuno-DHL. Rudy Arana contributed 24 and Greg Lagunzad 23, with RD Lopez making one-over 20.

"Perhaps, we didn't play as hard as we did in the first two rounds," said Lopez of his score in the last division.

Royal Canberra was third in the Six Division championship and Forest Hills fourth, followed by Baguio Golfers.

The other Mizuno-DHL team this year are Pia Aji, Pagasa, Wilson Ignacio, Ian Miguel Ucop, Calvin, Hapee Toothpaste, Baguio Antgolf, HS Calma, Gerry's Grill and Fil-Rio Corp.

SMB downs Coke, takes 2-1 edge

By Jose Navarro

DONDON Hontiveros rose to the occasion as San Miguel Beer escaped with an 86-81 decision over Coca-Cola to take a 2-1 lead in their best-of-seven series last night in the PBA Reinforced Conference Finals at the Araneta Coliseum.

Hontiveros stepped up in the absence of San Miguel Beer import Rafer Alston and Danny Ildefonso, who was suspended for punching Tim McCray of Coca-Cola in Game 2.

The Cebuano hotshot pumped in 15 of his team-high 23 points in the fourth quarter as the Beermen went through several deficits before putting the icing out of the imperious Tigers.

Jeffrey Cariaso and Bally Sakurdi took up the scoring cudgels for the Tigers, who struggled and played without Mel Chan, who also was suspended after that skirmish with Ildefonso.

"With or without an import, I know Coca-Cola will play their best to win. We're just lucky that our local stepped up tonight," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico.

Dante Gabalfin, a last-minute replacement for the injured Ildefonso, failed in create a ripple but contributed heavily on defense and rebounding, making Uichico doubly proud as well.

"Dante provided us a lot. It's better to have an import than play competition at all," said Uichico.

Bobby Jose also contributed with a long-haul flight from the United States, Gabalfin, the NBA's 1992 slam-dunk king, wound in 11 points and hauled down 10 rebounds in 36 minutes of action.

Gabalfin, who has a Filipino for a wife, arrived at dawn yesterday to replace Johnson on a temporary basis. Uichico declined to comment if they will keep Gabalfin for the remainder of the series.

Meanwhile, the Ildefonso-Beer management is usually applauded for its generosity, Ildefonso slapped an Atenean Tiger, yesterday, calling it grossly unfair in comparison to the sanction received by Ildefonso.

Scores:

SAN MIGUEL 86—Hontiveros 23, Pinto 19, Dimaio 9, Cruz 8, Cortez 7, Sakurdi 5, Ilustre 5, Abarra 2, Garcia 2.

COCA-COLA 81—Cariaso 20, Galinato 18, Simon 11, Wainwright 7, Ramos 6, Jones 6, Magalong 4, Sumerlin 5, Mariano 2, Franken 0, Arnaiz 0.

Quarters: 20-20, 41-39, 61-58, 86-81

RETHEL Hugnacan of Coke loses the ball as rare Beermen defend.

Hail Hall

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I fulfill a plan to Rodney Hall. Yesterday, Rodney disqualified himself in the third round of the Ulah Fil-Am Golf Invitational in Baguio City.

He now he'd be disqualified even if he didn't do what he did. Rodney, a customary of Baguio fame, signed for a wrong scorecard, a golf infraction that automatically disqualifies a player.

His Asia Brosnan of the Interactive Professionals Inc., the IP team's competition that has been handling the scoring chores for the 40-his golf the last three years or so, called the attention of referees about the discrepancy.

How did Ria, who hardly the extremely efficient IPI staff, score for him or Rodney Hall's card?

"Mr. Hall came to me while we were recording his scores and said, 'Hey, there was a mistake in my score at No. 8. I made 5 there but in the giant scoreboard outside, what appears is a 4.' And I showed him his scorecard and when he saw the 5 instead of 5 that he was saying, he readily said, 'I am disqualified,'" said Ria.

What a guy, the Rodney Hall.

It all golfers were like him, the jobs of mine may not be necessary as collecting tall receipts at the Northern Luzon Expressway.

Golf is a very exact game when it comes to rules. What will look like a non-issue in a round of golf will sometimes assumes an overall big issue that its existence cannot be ready in a player getting disqualified outright.

Rodney Hall's case illustrates it all.

Had he not witnessed his miscard yet, his scores would have been recorded, saving him from disqualification. The mere act of submitting your scorecard with your signature on it, you abandon all rights to your record for the day (say a single entry that is faulty in any of the 18 holes played would mean likely result in your disqualification.

The rare chance for Rodney Hall not getting disqualified was because of the fact that Ivan Smith Country Club duo he had signed showed a score worse than what he actually scored. Meaning, had the score he signed at No. 8 was for a 5 when he actually scored a 4, that 5 would have remained and he would not get disqualified.

Golf's exercises is such that it has actually more laws than the laws of state. That is why at times, we could see Mario golfers from pretty endlessly when they get hit with an all-seven ruling. The unfortunate thing is golf is, the words "honest mistake" don't exist in this game. You make a mistake and, in the process, you break a rule, you suffer a penalty. Unlike in a court of law, the court of golf has no court of appeals.

Rodney Hall knows that damn well and may his rho because.

***

FAITHFEAR, Jun Velasco, my personable sportswriter writes, a column for Sunday Punch, is rejoining all alumni of Dagupan City National High School to join the Grand Reunion on Dec. 28 in that bustling city in Pangasinan. Jun said all graduates from 1941 to 2003 will be treated to food and dance, with no less than my friend, Ramon Jacinto of the RJ & The three fame, providing music. I wish I could join the party and perhaps bolt some Bonbo songs in a duet with RJ. That'd be fun.

OVERSEAS NATIONAL LITTLE LEAGUER BASEBALL ASSOCIATION, INC. (ONLBA)
2003 - 2004 Baguio City Tournament
(As of November 29, 2003)

Senator / Ang Kaya
Coach
Manager
Assistant Coach

Dentist Boys
Head Coach
Manager

Baguio Boys
Baguio Boys Team
Coach
Manager

Whole Kids
Head Coach
Assistant Coach
Manager

Coach Ends: Round 1 - Starting Games

Senator
Coach
Manager
Assistant Coach
Mother's
Whole Kids

FINAL No Starting

Dentists
Baguio Boys
Whole Kids
ONLBA

SUAM SOFTBALL

Baguio Boys Girls
Dentist Girls
Whole Kids

Whole Kids
Coach
Manager
Assistant
Coach Team Coming Games

Baguio Girls
Baguio Boys Coaches
Olympia
Coach
Coach Up Boys Girls

Gabica faces Pampanga cue bets

THE "SEARCH for Tandaay the No. 1 Billiards Player" resumes with featured cue artist Antonio "Lagz" Gabica, back-to-back champion of the 9-Ball Tokyo Open, facing self-vain cue challengers from Pampanga at the Robinson's Malls.

Roland Garcia and Marvic Liang, earning their spots from tough town matches in Pampanga, will put Gabica into an acid test to improve Race-to-7 matches.

Sponsored by Tandaay the No. 1 Rhum, Robinson's Malls and Summit's Billiards, the matches will be aired over the National Broadcasting Network tonight on prime time.

Garcia is a 23-year-old native of Dungao, Pampanga, who topped the Dungao 9-Ball 2002 Championships while Sat Fernando native Liang, 23, recently topped the 2003 San Fernando 9-Ball Billiards crown.

The former of the matches gives Gabica a twice-to-beat advantage. The winners of the series will then be challenged to two new budding talents the following week.

The overall champion this year gets sponsorship from Gabica as its homegrown star and will carry the colors of Tandaay and the Philippines in prestigious international competitions in the near future.

The said event which was conceptualized by Tandaay advertising manager Larry U and supported by Tandaay marketing manager Andrea Co is aimed at boosting the image of billiards as a major sports spectacle in the country through television.

It is designed to help achieve much their dreams of becoming the country's next international billiards superstar. The country's foremost player, Ben Reyes, hails from Angeles City.

Interested parties may inquire with the Corporate Billiards League secretariat at 09 16-7222 9924 or may log on at the www.corporatebilliardsleague@yahoo.com.

Watch...Search for Tandaay The No. 1 Billiard Player Every Saturday on NBN 4, 8-9 PM

TANDUAY
THE NO. 1 RHUM

SPORTS TV

Compiled by Lorenzo Mangubat

Jones beats local drivers

GOLF driver Christian Jones, second a former world champion, was not in the mood to let his revered surname as he turned back the challenge of the local favorites in sweeping the championship round of the Asian Formula 2 Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Jones drove his Swift Dzire to a record 19 laps (FIG) to raise perfection to ride both intimidation of races of the series dubbed as "2003 Addict Mobile Formula 2 Super Pilot."

Jones' father, Alan, was the 1986 F1 champ.

The Aussie submitted the day's fastest lapping of 1:20.304 in Race 9 after he clocked 23:35.670, to prevail over Mark Goddard of Castrol-Antiqua Team Goddard and top local driver Popoy Manzer of Shell-Cocto-Filipino Team Jones.

It was Manzer who gave Jones a tough challenge as he stuck close to the Australian in the first 10 laps of the race sponsored by Addict Mobile. Herbert Bickard, Flo, Sanrong and Lloyd City Hotel together with series sponsors Yokohama, Denso and SCL.

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SPORTSWATCH

UCM, Kenka cagers top Grace clims

UCM Cooking Coils '8' and Kenka Plastics '96' posted outstanding victories to complete a sweep of four respective groups in the eliminations of the 2003 Grace Christian High School Inter-Barrio basketball tournament at the GCHS gym. With Kenka Ang and Cooky Sarmiento turns connecting the hoops early, UCM raced to a 44-21 lead at the intermission ending in an 82-78 win over Tadeo '82. Kenka had a comfortable lead after 8 quarters, 60-48, for a 6-1 win in Group B. Completing the Group B quarterfinal card were Amoro's '82 and Upsilonic '00 while Kenka '96 and Luzon also advanced to Group A Amoro's outright 6 wins, 30-10, while Kenka had 5 upsets, 29-14.

San Andres prevails in Guam meteorcas

GACEO Gerdon's Kenneth San Andres, who earned the moniker Wonder Boy due to his outstanding performances exploits, topped the Elks junior division of the FAB series. Read his records in the Guam International Circuit, Guam, USA. The multi-titled 14-year-old basketball standout romped to the first place with a mighty 10-0 slate finish in the race feat, edging Jhan Lipscomb and Shane Mercino for the overall junior title. He beat his closest pursuer by 13 seconds. "We should all be proud of his feat because he proved that he can be Asia's best young rider," said Dulce Recto, the manager for Marquez Orchestras, who accompanied the riders to the Guam meet.

Adidas 10K unfolds Sunday

THE 5TH Adidas King of the Road rolls off Sunday at the Global City in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig.

A record field of over 1,500 runners, the biggest ever in a 10K race, is expected to answer the starting gun at 6 a.m.

Veteran internationalists Reynaldo delos Reyes, Constantino Gabud, and Allen Quinay of Baguio City are touted to be the event's favorites, each defending champion Lisa Orbillo, Lisa Tambua, Marychel Mina and 14-year-old Rowland Agaton heading the field in the distaff side.

John P. Alamis, Adidas Phils. president and managing director; Angelica P. Sarza, marketing director; and Godofredo "Gandy" Carabin, sports marketing manager, will be on hand to welcome the runners and award the prizes to the top finishers.

INQUIRER Visayas

E-mail: [illegible]@inq7.net

Editor Jun Bandavel
Bureau Chief Ethelyn L. Benedicto

Siquijor villagers no longer fear the dark

By Omar D. Dumdum
Antique Millennium, Siquijor

EVERY Balingit closes the windows of his house as night approaches. Into that he is afraid of the *engo* (witch); for Siquijodnons, the creature is just a rumor made "legitimate" through generations of rumor telling.

The rumor comes from the belief that the Siquijor Island is the home of diwata (fairies).

From the mountaintop, residents of Barangay Olave were used to viewing the villages below as they glittered with light. But how the spirited barangay in Siquijor Villanueva, a remote town in the "Island of Fire," bonded up with voltage is another success story of a community whose progress emitted from empowerment.

Enrique Villanueva is popularly known to residents as its former name, Tulapalay, which is derived from a fish in the sea. A resident, called Tulingtingan, also associates the name to birds that dwell on the shore and pluck out subsisting from the sea.

In 1951, the old name was officially changed in honor the man whose efforts helped create the identity as a municipality, the late Gen. Enrique Villanueva.

Local peace and order has been described as relatively calm and peaceful. Detention cells are usually empty. There was a day in September when they were occupied not by criminals but by two wandering "buang" (mentally challenged persons) who were caught during a municipal campaign to send them to rehabilitation center.

The powerlessness may also show the people's simple way of life, perhaps because they belong to the most underprivileged. According to the "Poverty Mapping and Targeting Study" conducted by Dr. Ireneus Balisacan, Ateneo de Manila University, Siquijor Villanueva ranked as one of the poorest and most deprived municipalities in the country.

Aside from using the economic poverty threshold as basis for its ranking, the study listed three broad classifications of poverty indicators: quality of human capital (educational attainment, average number of household members, etc.); quality of housing and amenities (house materials and access to electricity, potable water, etc.); and accessibility conditions (state of infrastructure, farm-to-market roads, etc.).

Pilot area

In October 2001, the government requested assistance from the World Bank for its flagship program, the Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Kalahi).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, which will coordinate this project (to mitigate poverty project called Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (CIDSS), became the lead agency in implementing the new and enhanced anti-poverty project, Kalahi-CIDSS: Kapangyarihan at Kasaganaan sa Barangay (KKB).

The Kalahi-CIDSS-KKB Project aims to empower local communities or barangays and improve their governance by providing fund support for basic infrastructure, training programs and other capability-building activities.

Using the Balisacan study as basis for choosing beneficiaries, the Kalahi-CIDSS-KKB Project has been initiated in 46 provinces, including Siquijor.

The first of the project's three phases began in January with Siquijor Villanueva as the first and the only target municipality in Central Visayas. The second phase, which started in July, covered Siquijor town in Siquijor and Dimiao town in Bohol.

The third phase, which will start next month, will include 21 more towns in Bohol—Baco, Dauis, Buenavista, Garcia, Sikatuna, Cabul-an Garcia, Trinidad, Mayo, San Miguel, Pilar, Maribol and Carmen.

With 14 villages, Enrique Villanueva receives P6.2 million in seed grants from the Kalahi-CIDSS-KKB every year cycle. Each target municipality goes through three cycles in each phase.

On Jan. 6, four community development workers were deployed in Enrique Villanueva to guide the community in implementing the Kalahi-CIDSS-KKB. The project has a 15-day process in each cycle. In every step, the decision always comes from the barangay people, not from the deployed community development workers.

One of the most important steps, the latch, which is the conduct of the first Municipal Inter-Barangay Forum (MIBF), convenes representatives from all barangays in the town for a consultative prioritization of sub-projects proposed by their barangays. The MIBF decides on which sub-project will be funded.

'Bayanihan' spirit

On April 24, the MIBF in Enrique Villanueva gave priority to three sub-projects in nine barangays. Topping the list was the electrification project of Barangay Olave.

Wilfredo Perez, the village chief, could not believe that their sub-project was chosen since he feared that Olave being an "oppositionist barangay" might influence the MIBF's decision.

Balingit, who desired the project proposition most, prepared the sub-project proposal in the vernacular.

BAYANIHAN of the Olave people during the delivery of electric poles.

The sub-project will provide lighting to 41 households with 138 occupants in Olave and nearby Lower Parian. It can also help schoolchildren by giving them longer time to study at night, create income-generating projects apart from the seaweed farmers livelihood of farming, extracting and fermenting coconut juice, and provide communication devices that can be used in times of disaster and emergency.

Aug. 7 marked the start of the execution of the sub-project. Men and women of Olave donated the time and dug holes for 18 electric poles. They also scheduled regular barangay assemblies for consultation and monitoring updates.

The total sub-project cost was estimated at P1.05 million, 44 percent of which would come from the counterpart contribution of the municipality, barangay and the Province Siquijor Electric Cooperative Provided.

The switch-on ceremony was held on Oct. 14, almost a month earlier than its Nov. 4 target date of completion. Enrique Villanueva Mayor Raul Stanley Matias, Vice Gerardo B. Fua Sr., and Bohol Rogo, DSWD 7 Operations Division chief, attended.

Olave is also the first in the province to enjoy Provident's life-line rate, a new scheme that allows consumers to pay only for how much power they used, not for a minimum number of kilowatthours.

Dramatic

But the most dramatic transformation of the village is its empowered people who can now decide for themselves. They no longer have to depend on politicians who always promised them electricity during election time.

During a series of capability trainings conducted by the DSWD, the residents learned the basics of accounting and bookkeeping, cash-generating community infrastructure and participatory local governance.

Presently, they are organizing the Barangay Olave Homeowner's Electric Association (Bohea), which will work hand in hand with Proseco in the operations and maintenance of the power system. They plan to select an officer who will collect payment for monthly consumption from each household and remit the amount to the Proseco office, which is 22 km away.

Balingit and the rest of the residents can now enjoy the luxury that sweeps their homes even at night.

OMAR D. Dumdum writes for the Kalahi-CIDSS-KKB project in Central Visayas.

Remy Ortaliz; 67

LUCID INTERVAL

Rosevelyn F. Guanzon

MISSION Occidental will surely miss Dr. Remy Ortaliz who died of cancer.

A physician, teacher, family lay minister and advocate of women's and children's rights, Remy was president of Buklig Foundation.

Her presence was both comforting and compelling. She believed in prayer and power. I have never seen her afraid of anyone or anything, even cancer, and she was blessed with a peaceful and painless death after her 3 o'clock prayer.

Since 1986, Remy was a prominent figure in rallies and peace advocacy. I remember her in 1989 up to 1990 when she vigorously reached for the Tree of Peace in Iriis Centennial in Cauayan, together with the late Bishop Emeritus Antonio F. Fortich. In 1989 she also joined protests against Operation Thunderbolt, the Army offensive in the southern part of Negros Occidental, which resulted in the evacuation of 30,000 Ilocanos-Ilonggos in Lopez Church and the death of more than 200 children.

In contrast was the Catholic Church's opposition to military operations. Here, that she and many other church workers, some priests and even some nuns (myself included) is communists or communist cadres. In one meeting in the provincial capitol, retired Gen. Raimundo Jacque called Remy the "mayor-mayan" during Ramon (the pseudo-mayor of Bacolod.) "not knowing that she was in the same room.

Instead of being intimidated, Remy continued protesting against military offensives that dislocated communities. In a letter to the editors, Jacque later defected to the communist-led National Democratic Front and would often use Remy in human rights events.

Remy's latest work is the program called Healthy Start, where they teach parents how to respect their children's rights in order to prevent abuse.

Remy turned 67 last June 25, the start of the global 16-day campaign against Violence Against Women. For her, that was a fitting birthday gift.

GENDER JUSTICE AWARDS. On June 25, women's groups and the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) held an exhibit on violence against women in the Senate.

They lobbied for the passage of a law preventing women from abuse. The focus was once again on Sen. Ma. Luisa Ejercito, chair of the Senate committee on women, and Senate President Franklin M. Drilon, who practically wrote the Anti-Trafficking Law of 2003.

On Oct. 6, the NCRFW and the University of the Philippines Center for Women's Studies will sponsor a "Men Speak Out Against VAW."

The Gender Justice Awards, sponsored by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, will also be launched. The awards will go to five women outstanding trial judges who rendered decisions on cases of violence against women (rape, marital rape, murder, parricide, battering, psychological and other forms of abuse in legal separation and nullity of marriage cases) in the last five years and which meet the following criteria:

- The decisions must show gender sensitivity and a keen understanding of violence against women.
- It addresses the issue of discrimination against women as defined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- The judge must not have shown inconsistency to women's litigants.

Some of the decisions which will surely be nominated are the first married rape case decided in the Regional Trial Court of Davao City and the first sexual harassment conviction in the cyberCity.

Women's organizations are strongly encouraged to send their nominations, as well as individuals and civic groups. Submission of nominations begin on Dec. 25 and will end on Feb. 1, 2004.

Women lawyers in the region will convene the women's desk decisions, before the board of judges, composed of, among other persons, Sheila Gonzales and Evelyn Urson, will choose the awardees. Among the partner organizations in this project are the Legal Assistance for Women Network (Lawyer), the Women's Legal Bureau Inc., and Gentle Club of Helen Pang, whose president is Sally Magat.

Send your nominations to the IP Center for Women's Studies, UP Diliman, Quezon City, tel/fax 9218000666 rosie@up.edu.ph mobile phone: 09228942233.

New opposition bloc ousts Ping

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE NEWLY formed anti-opposition group Kaalyansyan ng Magkakaisang Pilipino will not include Sen. Panfilo Lacson in its selection process for presidential standard-bearer in the 2004 elections, either as a faction of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) nor in case of Lacson's bid to run as an independent, Kaalyansyan leaders said.

With Lacson's conclusion, movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., the only other presidential aspirant, would likely get KDP's endorsement, said Sen. Miguel Zubiri, a key member of the coalition.

"Kung ako ang tatanungin, mas maganda kung hindi na siya (Lacson) kasama," said Zubiri, who is also the LDP president.

Zubiri said the KDP's endorsement would be made up of the LDP, Partido ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) and the PDP-Laban.

LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara, who announced Lacson's nomination as "illegal and unauthorized," said the Lacson that Lacson "took himself out of the nomination" by his illegal nomination.

We can say Lacson is the natural opposition by not considering him (Lacson)," Angara said in a phone interview.

In a statement, former Senate Prince Emilio said Lacson and the LDP leaders "know and accepted the selection rules" and should have respected them from "they honestly defied them." "Senator Lacson has thus effectively taken himself out of the selection process."

Emilio said that Lacson's nomination by a "splinter" group was "an act of unacceptable incongruity."

On Thursday, a splinter group in the LDP, claiming to represent 19 percent of the party, nominated Lacson as its presidential standard-bearer in the 2004 polls. The faction defended Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino. LDP secretary general, House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla and Representatives Rene Espina, Abraham Mitra, Gus Lagbayan and Gilbert Remulla.

DUBYING: the hardest—PMP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. and Director Edwardo Matibano—look out at each other's backs, Anyway and with the President around, as peacemakers

Ping or FPJ: Erap faces tough choice

From page A1

Poe was willing to slide down to vice president, Estrada said this would never happen.

"How can the strongest among them be the weakest? What we are talking about here is winnability," Estrada said in Filipino.

But speaking after Lacson's exit, if the former President appointed to have opened up to the possibility of supporting Lacson's candidacy—if he agrees?

"I asked him to give me time to talk to Panfilo (Poe) for there to be time to talk this among his brothers," Estrada said in the phone interview.

One has to give way

"You cannot. Manny Pacquiao cannot be box from preparing for this bout going all over the country to meet with his leaders, seeking support for his presidential candidacy. You cannot be like that. You have to give (way)," he said.

In 1992, the popular Estrada gave up his presidential candidacy to Fidel Ramos, endorsing Ramos to "finishing" Corazon Aquino's remaining term. He was, while Cojuangco lost.

Lacson issued a two-page statement announcing his meeting with Estrada.

He said that at this stage, especially after my supporters within and outside the ranks of Bresadentsyang Filipino pro-claimed me as their presidential candidate, there is no more turning back," Lacson said. "I told him that the only way I can support from various sectors and political groups which are closely identified as that of Erap (Estrada) yesterday (Thursday) is a compelling reason why I should not back out from the race.

"My heart agreed, however, that the unity of the opposition, especially on the ground, was necessary in order to defeat the present dispensation, and he promised to help exert all efforts toward this end," Lacson said.

Nominated but ...

Lacson was nominated the other day by a faction of the LDP as the party's standard-bearer, but LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara declared the nomination "illegal and unauthorized" and "illegal".

A group of LDP congressmen is supporting Lacson's presidential bid while other LDP leaders led by Sen. Edgardo Angara are supporting Fernando Poe Jr.

In his statement, Lacson said he told Estrada that his camp had been preparing as early as last year for the presidential elections and because of this, shifting down to vice president was "out of the question."

As part of his preparations, he told the ex-President that he had spoken last February to Guingona about the businessman's political ambition.

Lacson said he also discussed his candidacy with Poe sometime around June this year.

"At last in front of Erap, Mr. Poe begged off from running and instead suggested I should be the presidential candidate of the opposition."

Hard to choose

During his talk with Lacson, Estrada said there was no discussion about any of the two candidates sliding down to vice president.

Estrada said it was hard for him to pick between the two.

"Both are my friends and kumpadre. (Lacson) for him not to have spoken with me—after everything that we've been through, he said was beside Estrada's ouster from Malacañang.

"I hope things will resolve themselves," said Estrada.

In his statement, Lacson said he told Estrada that the survey which showed him lagging behind "was arbitrary sensitive."

1992 race

He likened today's situation to the 1992 race, when the survey leader at that time, he said, was Senate President Ambo Saguisag, who lost dismally to Fidel Ramos.

Estrada, he said, was concerned about the possibility of the administration resorting to massive cheating in the elections.

The ex-President told Lacson that Poe's popularity "will make it difficult for the administration to cheat him of his votes."

"I reassured (Poe) that if he selected me as his running mate, then it will cheat anybody who wants a fiasco in its hand: last power, Mr. Fernando Poe Jr. is elected," Lacson said.

Retired generals

The senator said he assured Estrada that his camp was prepared "for whatever manipulations this administration," as he referred him that thousands of retired soldiers and policemen, including retired generals, have vowed to help them guard the ballot boxes "to make sure that every vote for us will be counted."

"The presence of retired generals in my campaign will serve as a deterrent to the use of the AFP and PNP in the end," he added.

Lacson said that Estrada told him that "he had yet to see the same determination from Poe since he knew from the start that he was a reluctant candidate."

Meetings canceled

To Erap, President Erap said that he tried to convince him but was lucky to run before his name came up in the media as a possible presidential candidate but he was unsuccessful," the senator said.

He said he and Poe were originally set to meet on Wednesday but the meeting did not push through because the latter was sick with the flu.

The next meeting was set by today but was canceled anew, he said. Lacson said he had even canceled a three-day visit to Mindanao because of this meeting.

GMA brokers truce in PNP discord

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Ebdane's resignation for his alleged weak leadership and corruption under his watch.

But Ms Macapagal took a dig at Matibano, reminding police officials to "observe the time of command and avoid procrastinating and lamenting their complaints in public because these create a negative perception of the PNP and contribute to the demoralization in its ranks."

Mechanics for redress

She said there were mechanisms for the redress of grievances and officers should just follow due process and observe strict discipline within the police organization.

The President ended the reconciliation by meeting with Ebdane, Matibano and other top PNP officials inside Ebdane's office at noontime. They were all smiles when they emerged from the 30-minute closed-door meeting.

Reporters initially began Thursday night of the Interior Secretary Jose Lina and Housing Secretary Michael Defensor met with Matibano and Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya at the Camp Aguinaldo Golf Club.

"We're really on friends and we just chatted," Ebdane told reporters. "In the deal PNP I am like another and he is another of the family."

Ebdane said he was told by the President to take care of the PNP, and Matibano, to support his leadership.

"He (Matibano) committed to follow the PNP chain of command after learning the reasons behind the recent reshuffle of the ranking officials of the PNP," Lina said.

Promoted

The reconciliation immediately placed Matibano out of the floating status he had found himself in as a result of the maneuvers he had made against the PNP chief.

Effective yesterday, he was promoted to chief of the Directorate for Investigation and detection management, the post he had initially refused to accept because the revamp was supposedly "hasty."

"I was just questioning the process and it's been settled so I'm accepting the position," Matibano told reporters.

The President instructed the Department of Interior and Local Government and the National Police Commission to settle all misunderstandings and grievances within the PNP ranks as a result of the top-to-bottom revamp.

Matibano had earlier claimed that the reassignment orders he was handed on the "two-hour notice" in which officers close to Ebdane were lobbied to choice positions in the PNP.

But a number of top PNP officials had told the Inquirer that Matibano himself, along with Berroya, was among the officers closest to the President. The two, the officials claimed, had even lobbied not to be affected by the revamp.

Berroya was supposed to be replaced by Chief Supt. Alfredo de Vera but was retained inadvertently.

"Their lobbying was the very reason Ebdane could not initially implement the revamp," one official told the Inquirer. "He could not act on his own because he had to follow orders from Malacañang."

Golang's appointment

Ebdane yesterday explained the appointment of Director Enrique Golang—which had removed Matibano and Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, ranked chief of the National Capital Region Police Office.

Golang, he said, got the powerful PNP IMA. A post owing to his competence and because the other choice, Director Ricardo de Leon, chose to remain the NCRPO post over the Chief of Directorial Staff position.

Golang, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class 1977, was the classmate of Interior Secretary Velasco and De Leon, who were at batch ahead of him.

Wasted funds

But Matibano's supporters did not particularly involve the revamp.

He claimed that "20-25 percent" of the PNP's funds had been going to "waste" in construction projects, with some even going to the pockets of some members of the "outside the family."

"That has to be addressed," Ebdane said. "But as far as I'm concerned, I don't interfere (with the funds). There was a lot of resentment because I have to cut those are close to 10 more planes, especially in stations which had been stranded by the IRA and the MILF."

Senate reaction

In the Senate, a former police officer and senior secretary told warning PNP officials to stop "washing their dirty linen in public" because it was causing demoralization among the ranks.

Instead of engaging in a word war before the media and the public, Barbers urged Matibano and those identified with the revamp ordered by Ebdane to endure the PNP's grievance over the issue to settle their misgivings.

"The PNP has its own mechanism to address these grievances. They should go through this process," said Barbers, who rose from the ranks as a police officer and left the service to run for public office.

In the same breath, Barbers offered to settle the dispute between Matibano et al. and Ebdane, saying he was willing to serve as a go-between to patch up their differences.

Asked about the grievances of the police generals in resigning the revamp, Barbers said "They might be truth to their complaints. That's why I'm asking them to lodge their grievances before the proper forum."

"To listeners," he said. "Matibano is a very effective officer."

Guardians' support

In Calamba City, a faction of the Brotherhood Bonifacio Guardians Brotherhood Inc. Gregorio "Ka Oryo" Honasan at its backs' politically supported Matibano's allegations of graft and corruption.

Ernesto Mercado, national spokesman of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. (PGBI), hailed Matibano's act of divulging the alleged palm-kicking and corruption in the PNP.

He likened Matibano's act to the idealism of the Magdalo officers who led the Oakwood mutiny that exposed graft and corruption in the armed forces.

But Senior Supt. Napoleon Caduada, director for administration of the Calabarzon police command, yesterday said Matibano should learn to respect the PNP as an institution and remain committed to it in spite of personal differences.

Professional

He said it was unfortunate that Matibano, a Philippine Military Academy Class 1977 graduate had forgotten what they had learned in the academy about loyalty.

"We are trained to be professional police officers. We should work for the people and abide by the PNP organization where we owe allegiance. We should follow and work. We move, we live," Caduada, a member of PMA Class 1979, said.

Ranking officials of the Calabarzon and Metro Manila regional police offices yesterday denied reports that several of their senior and junior officers had gone en masse leave after the AFP-to-lower the top officers of the PNP.

Both police officers likewise expressed their full support for Ebdane. PAGE reports from Aurora Flores, Aberlan Romero, PDI front here Aurora Romero, Nestor Cabrera, PDI front here Lucas Barrera

Gov't calls in Marines in anti-kidnap campaign

From page A1

would focus on heavily tinted vehicles, those with no license plates, and those whose drivers do not match the vehicles' registration papers.

"The conduct of the checkpoint will be done in a way courteous but with utmost and those checkpoints would not in any way inconvenience the public," Reyes told reporters. "We are after criminal elements so we need to solicit everybody's support and understanding."

At checkpoints, Reyes said, military officers would be tapped to deal with armed people encountering military authorities, while policemen would be asked to screen armed motorists who do not present licenses to as PNP officers.

Recent successes

The new security measures will be implemented after the DILT scored recent successes in the campaign to stop kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

Kaga was rescued by the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response Group's team in an encounter in Pulupandan Town, Bonanza-Bon, Cavite, at around 2:30 p.m. One of the two suspects was killed while his two companions were arrested and brought to PACTF headquarters in Camp Crame for interrogation, said Supt. Rudel Sermonia, Bonanza-Bon city police chief.

The 40-year-old Kaga, a founder of KFP dogs and a resident of San Pablo City in Laguna, was abducted near the SM Concepcion in San Pedro, Manila, last Wednesday between he could not say if ransom had been paid prior to the PACTF operation.

Kaga's rescue came a day after the release of the 10-year-old Chinese-Filipino girl who was kidnapped in Pasig, Manila, last Nov. 21.

Kidnappers 1, 4, 5

A few hours after the release, police arrested Allan Kaga, the fourth most wanted kidnapper in the PACTF list, in Iloilo. The No. 5 most wanted, or army officer Filmer Carreon, was arrested in Malabon three days earlier.

Reyes and Calanoc were presented to the President at the press briefing in Camp Crame.

The No. 1 kidnapper, medical doctor Rolando Olobos Pan, was killed in an encounter in Dinalupihan, Bataan, on Nov. 20.

Last Wednesday, police killed an alleged car thieves who had run into a checkpoint in Manila. Mr Macapagal said one of the main suspects was among those involved in the kidnapping of the children of Regina Rep. Jules Soliman's last year.

PI-million rumors

Unidentified men who commandeered an Isuzu Crosswind sticker bound to Davao on Dec. 1.

That same day, the family received a phone call from a person demand who demanded P5 million in ransom.

The victim was later found abandoned near the Mandaluyong City Hall.

The victim's wife, Elsa, said there were no ransoms but no ransom was paid.

A pistol was recovered from the suspects.

The victim had a month's homecoming with his 60-and7 year-old daughter both at the PACTF headquarters at Camp Crame as reunited again.

"I now understand what families of other kidnap victims have gone through," Elsa said.

The President and Reyes, a former defense secretary, witnessed the reunion.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

METRO

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2004

FOUR DIGIT: 4 9 2 5 (no exact order) SUERTRES: 8 8 3

MEGALOTTO 6/45: 6 7 16 19 28 33

E-mail: metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

Another shabu lab uncovered in Pasig

By Christine Esguerra

POLICE yesterday busted another illegal drugs laboratory containing huge volumes of shabu ingredients and the most sophisticated shabu-making equipment ever discovered in the country.

Armed by a search warrant, members of the anti-illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (ARD SOTF) raided a warehouse at Building 4 C subdivision, Sandoval Compound on Evangelista Street in Barangka, Pasig City at around 1 p.m.

Deputy Director General Eduardo Ageljay, ARD SOTF chief, said the laboratory could manufacture around 500 to 1,000 kilos of high-grade shabu daily owing to the massive equipment found at the warehouse.

It had a heavy duty laboratory mixer, a high-capacity regulator, a dryer which was nearly new, seven 50-liters, 15 tanks of methylated hydrogen gas tanks, and a huge stockroom.

"The equipment here were best seen in the country before," Ageljay told reporters.

He said the crackdown was aired in Cebu the final cabin coming out of the warehouse.

Besides the equipment, Ageljay and his men also found key ingredients in the manufacture of shabu. They included acetone, diluted chloride, sodium hydroxide, activated charcoal, 900 sacks of off-white powder, glacial acetic acid, 32 multiple-gallon containers of dark brown liquid, and other chemicals kept in several containers.

Though no suspect had been arrested during the raid, Ageljay said police would file charges against Willy Lee and Albert Tan, who had leased the warehouse from Cleyland Inc.

Quoting security guards assigned in the compound, Ageljay said the occupants usually refused inspection whenever they brought in cargo inside the warehouse.

Ageljay said information about the warehouse came from one of the suspects arrested when the AED-SOTF intercepted huge volumes of shabu ingredients at the port area in Manila last week.

The informer told police that the chemicals were to be trucked to the Pasig warehouse.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo with (from left) Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, Deputy Gen. Edgardo Aglipay, and Pasig Mayor Soledad Eusebio examine the sacks containing ingredients for illegal drugs in a warehouse on Evangelista Street, Pasig City, from a police official sparse one of the drug canisters shortly after the raid. (INQUIRER)

High court urged to sack judge in Kuratong case

By Philip Tubeza

THE PROSECUTION in the Kuratong baleleng case yesterday formally asked the Supreme Court to oust Quezon City Judge Ma. Theresa Yuhao for her alleged biased acts in favor of the accused in the case, including the transfer of court records.

Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño led the filing of the 29-page complaint against Yuhao before the Office of the Court Administrator of the Supreme Court. The prosecutors asked that Yuhao be immediately suspended and investigated for her dishonesty, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service, inefficiency, partiality and knowingly rendering an unjust judgment.

The prosecutors are calling against Yuhao for dismissing on Nov. 12 the murder charges against Sen. Panfilo Lacson and 33 others in the Kuratong Baleleng case for "lack of probable cause."

The prosecution said that there is overwhelming evidence in the case that would even merit the conviction of the accused. They have asked Yuhao to inhibit herself from the case.

The prosecution also accused Yuhao of falsifying the transcript of stenographic notes pertaining to the Oct. 13 hearing on the case.

The prosecutors said that on Oct. 13, Yuhao walked out of the hearing. We according to the official transcript, Yuhao issued an order to open court.

Gun ban to start Dec. 15 as police gear up for polls

By Edson Tandoc Jr. and Leila Salaverria

ELECTION season will officially start for the Philippine National Police on Dec. 15 as it starts enforcing the national gun ban.

In a memorandum, the National Capital Region Police Office ordered the city police districts in Metro Manila to close up plans for the national elections next year.

The memorandum told district directors to draw up measures to implement the ban on firearms and other deadly weapons from Dec. 15 to June 8, 2005.

Among the measures indicated in the order is the setting up of mobile checkpoints.

Resolution No. 6450 of the Commission on Elections state that deadly weapons are banned 149 days before the elections on May 10, 2005, and 30 days after.

Violations of these ban or those with permits to carry would be banned unless the owner gets an authorization from the Comelec.

The police districts have also been directed to set up election monitoring and assistance centers in their respective headquarters.

The police were also told to update their list of areas of concern where "election-related offenses were committed during the previous elections."

Officials said this would aid the police in planning for deployment of police checkpoints during the election period.

Meanwhile, the Manila's Finest Brotherhood Association, Inc., yesterday criticized PNP chief Arturo Lomibao and Director Criminal Investigation and Detection Group head Eduardo Matillano for fighting in public.

"They should resolve their differences because their word was would not help the PNP's image," BPOI Antonio Antonioni, BPMAI spokesperson said.

Antonioni said the PNP leaders should be the ones to set an example for their subordinates to follow.

He however said Manila policemen were affected much by the "rift-free-for-all" between Lomibao and Matillano, who were forced to shake hands yesterday by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The group is more concerned with the PNP system and how it affects our members," Antonioni said. "Not about issue as matters personalities."

The senior district director of the two police officials to soon to help put the PNP on track for securing next year's polls.

PDEA exec, 2 others rapped for shooting NBI field man

By Leila Salaverria

THE MANDAUE Bureau of Investigation yesterday filed frustrated murder and theft charges against three agents of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) including a police superintendent, for shooting an NBI agent in Mandaue City.

The three PDEA agents were identified as Senior Supt. Orlando Mahilum, PO3 Norman Jesus Nonan and PO1 Giovanni Bolisa, all members of the Special Enforcement Service. They were charged before the Mandaue Prosecutor's Office.

Nonan and Bolisa earlier surrendered to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) office of the Philippine National Police.

The PDEA agents were accused of shooting and wounding Special Investigator Marvin Manzano, a member of the NBI's Intelligence Special Operations Division, and taking away the victim's firearm, wallet and badge before fleeing on board a white Toyota Revo.

The police said the incident happened at around 10:30 p.m. last Wednesday in front of the Mandaue City Hall.

Among the witnesses interviewed by the police in the morning up of the incident was Epifanio.

Resolution No. 6450 of the Commission on Elections state that deadly weapons are banned 149 days before the elections on May 10, 2005, and 30 days after.

Even licensed firearms or those with permits to carry would be banned unless the owner gets an authorization from the Comelec.

The memorandum told district directors to draw up measures to

NCRPO runs up ₱25-M power bill; official blames it on budget deficit

NORTHERN Police District officials recently issued an unusual order to their men—conserve on water and power use.

That is because the unpaid water and electricity bills of the National Capital Region Police Office have already amounted to ₱25 million, according to a memo on display at the 4PD headquarters.

The utility bills of all police districts in Metro Manila are paid for by the NCRPO.

A police official yesterday told the Inquirer that the government's lack of cash allocation is part of the reason why the NCRPO has been incurring debts in its water, phone and electric bills.

The official, who refused to be named, explained that in the budget appropriated for the police, there are amounts that are not based on the payment of power and water utilities. But he said the actual cash given to the police is either short of the appropriation or delayed.

Due to the limited cash allocation, the police, just like other government agencies, tend to postpone expenses. The officials and the policemen and personnel's salaries and benefits always come first.

In a June 27 memo, 4PD Inspector Israel Sugui, chief, Logistical Management Division, issued guidelines to ensure implementation measures to stop the "alarming increase" in the monthly water and electricity bills of the headquarters, police stations and precincts in Manila.

Per another police official from the NCRPO, denied the debt has reached ₱25 million. However, the official has yet to confirm the exact figure. Leila Salaverria, Edson Tandoc Jr.

MMDA to implement bus scheme–for real

By Margaux Ortiz

TOO many, it's serious.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority officials have warned bus operators and drivers that they are not conducting any more dry runs for the Organized Bus Route, or single dispatch system.

"The full implementation of the OBR on Monday will be the real thing," MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said.

Hardheaded bus drivers and operators will face severe penalties," he stressed.

Vergel de Dios said the MMDA will deploy its entire force of 1,500 traffic enforcers on EDSA if needed.

He also said that they have added 60 more dispatchers to the original 100 to control the number of buses plying EDSA.

"We need to ensure the scheme's success this time," Vergel de Dios said.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando had promised bus operators earlier this week that after one month of assessment, the agency would scrap the program if it fails to solve EDSA's traffic woes.

Fernando also promised to lift the number-coding scheme for buses after the month-long assessment—scheduled to end the OBR success.

Vergel de Dios said that the lack of cooperation and support from bus operators and drivers had caused the past OBR dry runs to fail.

He said most of EDSA's 4,000 bus drivers were not aware of the new scheme because of lack of coordination with their operators.

To solve the problem, the drivers were unable to go through half-day seminars on the basic rules and regulations of the bus scheme.

Vergel de Dios said that without certificates of completion to show to dispatchers, the drivers would not be allowed to ply their routes.

The MMDA would also be stricter about the queue cards they would distribute to the bus drivers, Vergel de Dios said.

The queue cards are issued to bus drivers when they leave their terminals. The cards ensure that the buses do not overtake each other and ensure space according to single file on Edsa's yellow lane.

Vergel de Dios said that the drivers were not aware of the queue cards' importance during the scheme's dry runs.

He said that one of the 1,000 queue cards they distributed, only a few were made their way back to the MMDA.

"These few ones were had exemplars written on them, directed against the MMDA," the traffic chief said.

Vergel de Dios warned drivers that those who failed to return their queue cards would be slapped with a ₱1,000 fine for the first offense. On the second offense, their bus would be impounded, he said.

DEATH PENALTY ADVOCATES GET THEIR WISH

In this file photo, sympathizers of slain kidnap victim Bong Ty carry banners demanding death to kidnappers during a funeral procession in Manila. Sp. a 20-year-old executive of Coca-Cola, was killed shortly after she was abducted. President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday yielded to the clamor of anti-crime groups and reimposed the death penalty beginning January.

WPD relents, gives bonus to 200 cops

By Leila B. Salaverria

CHRISTMAS won't be blue for 200 erring Western Police District lawmen after all.

WPD director Chief Supt. Orlando Rabang yesterday ordered the reinstatement of their yearend bonus, which was earlier withheld as penalty for minor administrative offenses they had committed.

"I requested that the policemen be given some consideration, and that their forfeiture of pay as penalty be implemented on a staggered basis," Rabang told the bureau.

"It's all in the spirit of Christmas," he added.

The 200 policemen, all members of the Manila's First Brotherhood Association, Inc. (MFBAI), had complained that the forfeiture was being implemented on top of the earlier forfeiture of their pay as penalty for administrative offenses they had committed.

The policemen said this was unfair because it was not provided by National Police Commission (Napolcom) policy.

But while Rabang ordered the release of the retained cash gift, he lectured the policemen about performing their duties so that they would not be slapped with administrative charges.

He told them not to forget that they were required to attend formations, should not be late for work, and should not be absent without leave.

Rabang pointed out that they would not have suffered forfeiture of bonus had they performed their duties.

"I hope this time they learned a lesson," the WPD chief said.

MFBAI spokesperson SPO2 Antonio Estanislao welcomed Rabang's decision because it means the affected lawmen would be bringing home a little extra for the holidays.

But he said the PNP should not have withheld the Christmas bonus in the first place because it was not authorized by its Magdalena policy.

Estanislao explained that only salaries could be forfeited as penalty.

Lawmen foil rob; 6 nabbed

By Tina Santos

THE POLICE scored anew yesterday afternoon after they foiled a payroll robbery in Quezon City and arrested six alleged remnants of a notorious robbery gang.

Intelligence agents of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) and Central Police District, backed up by the CPD Special Weapons and Tactics team and Eastern Traffic Command, apprehended the suspects after the latter attempted to pull a robbery at the Home Squad Security Agency at Kamias Building on Quezon Avenue corner Edsa at about 2:30 p.m.

NCRPO chief Ricardo de Leon declined to identify the suspects but said these were members of the Hernandez crime group.

"We still could not disclose the identities of the suspects because of operational details. All I can say is that they are engaged in robbery operations," De Leon told reporters.

De Leon told the bureau that policemen were in the scene after receiving information about suspicious looking men in a blue Isuzu Elf van roaming the area.

Initial reports said six men had swooped on the security agency's office but failed to pull off the heist when the policemen arrived.

The police recovered two .38-caliber revolvers, high-powered firearms and a grenade, which the suspects allegedly dumped in a nearby vacant lot.

Five of the agency's security guards were also involved in the NCRPO headquarters to give statements.

Two days, no heard a pulled black Mitsubishi Delica were also spotted by CPD operatives for questioning.

But De Leon clarified that the security guards and two men in the Delica were not suspects.

He said they were merely invited to shed light on the investigation.

MetroBriefs

No overloading

THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) yesterday started truck owners and drivers that it would impound overloaded vehicles. MMDA Traffic Operations Center Director Angelito Mergal de Bray said it just maintains its continuous trucks breaking down in critical points like underpasses and flyovers and causes heavy traffic. He said the MMDA would be installing weigh in bridges that would be used to determine overloaded trucks. **Marlyn Cruz**

Grenade attack

MUNTINLUPA Councilors and Teddy Tambio, both of Makati City and Mary Ann Magbuhat and Constancio Maturan, both of Pasay City, were wounded when a man hurled a grenade at their late Thursday night at Alabang City. They were having a drinking spree along Lacson Street at 7:45 p.m. when the unidentified suspect struck. **Rhoda Reyes-Delos Reyes and Edwardy Columbres Tarubal**

3 CPD cops charged

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman yesterday recommended the filing of criminal charges against SPO1 Aaron Cortez and Rodolfo Limin, and PO2 Bernardo Aranguez of the Eastern Police District for the illegal arrest of a businessman and his employee. A preliminary investigation found probable evidence to support the complaint of trespassing and robbery since Nov. of Mary Jane Tecala, of Kapitolyo Street. **Doris Garcia**

Save a marriage

BETTER PHILIPPINES, a Catholic healing ministry, offers hope to couples experiencing marriages and family ruined. Before couples (Friends for Enthusiasm) helps husbands and wives with troubled marriages regain strong relationship. The program consists of a five-to-weekend and six follow-up afternoon sessions. Participants has set another weekend from Dec. 12 to 14 of the SAGE Formation House in Antipolo City. The follow-up sessions will be held in Quezon City. For inquiries, call Fr. Joe Montoya at 534-2917, Melissa and Mich Fernandez at 800-1002, and Ric and Fer Carlos at 718-3880.

Xmas not for cats, dogs in Navotas

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

CHILDREN planning to go caroling in Navotas would not have to worry about being chased away by stray dogs because chances are there won't be any.

Over the last two weeks, the town's agriculture office has been going around town and catching strays to reduce and even suppress rabies.

"These are locked up in the hope that their owners would come by and pay for their release. If not released in three days, these are put to sleep through lethal injection.

Pet owners convicting stray cats or dogs for the first time would have to pay P50. Released pets which again go astray and are caught a second time will have to be retrieved for P500.

Agriculturist Officer Raul Jude Gonzales said they conduct daily rounding up operations in public places in compliance with a three-year-old ordinance.

The ordinance, which created the Task Force Walang Rabies, aims to prevent the spread of diseases like rabies.

Gonzales said they used to allow strangers to adopt captured pets but had stopped because many of the animals ended up as food or appetizers in dining spots.

Revamp shows indiscipline at PNP

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE CLIENT revamp at the Philippine National Police (PNP) means that even minor policy officials are underexplored. Several of those adversely affected by the reshuffle didn't want to budge from their positions.

If those at the top of the PNP can't take some unconfirmed, what can you expect from those in the lower echelon?

* * *

The government has lately been warning against kidnapping with the arrest or killing of leaders and members of kidnap-for-ransom gangs.

The reward system recently put up has done its job. People who inform on kidnappers are given handsome rewards. As much as P5 million is given for the capture, dead or alive, of notorious kidnappers.

Had they done this before, the cases of kidnap-for-gain would have dwindled long ago.

Unfortunately, even if the reward system was late in coming, still many kidnappers will fall. Money moves people.

* * *

If the case of my friend, Phil Ly Sombero, against Ford Philippines is to be an indication, the much-hallowed Ford Explorer and Ford Expedition are lemons. And Ford Motor Co. doesn't want to take responsibility for its lemons in the country.

Sombero was a Ford sport utility vehicle (SUV) fanatic. He bought two Ford SUVs, Expedition and Explorer be-cause they looked tough. He wanted to be identified with the tough-guy image of the SUV.

Sombero's new Ford Expedition figured. True, he'd smoked out after negotiating in the middle of a flooded street in Metro Manila. The other vehicles, the ubiquitous Pinoy jeepney and much cheaper Toyota Revo, were able to wade through the flooded street.

Sombero took the Expedition to the Ford Lihis shop in Quezon City to have it checked. Without consulting him, the shop drastically changed the engine oil and charged him P13,000.00 for it.

* * *

My friend protested because he only wanted to know from Ford why such a drastic change and expensive SUV needed such an oil and a few Ford while other cheaper vehicles would go through.

* * *

"In fairness to my car, Mike, they probably were trying to factory defect and wanted me to pay more for the car," said Sombero, a retired policeman who's now working for a big business firm.

He presented with Ford Lihis, but he was not listened to. He then wrote the main Ford office in the US. Still, his complaints was ignored. Up to now, there has been no action on his complaint.

I am not hoping that if my complaint is publicized, Ford Motors might act on my complaint," Sombero said in a letter to this writer.

* * *

Sombero is not the first Ford SUV owner to complain against Ford Lihis. In fact, he is the third.

A Chinoy friend complained to me two years ago that his newly-bought Ford Expedition kept overheating out. He said he took his Expedition to Ford Lihis, but it could not find out what was wrong with the SUV.

Another friend who owned a Ford Expedition complained that the overheating of his engine. He hasn't checking sounds from its underside. This friend has sold the Expedition and bought a Japanese-made SUV.

What's the moral of the above-item? Before planning to buy an Expedition, think twice.

BUSINESS

E-mail at business@inquirer.com.ph
Website www.inquirer.net

Editor Raul O. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Connie S. Mariano

November inflation rises to 3.3%

Stocks end lower

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INFLATION rate rose to 3.3 percent in November from 3.1 percent a year ago as the weakening of the peso and the uptick in oil prices exerted pressure on prices of food and utilities.

The 11-month inflation rate is an average of 3.1 percent, still lower than the government's target of 4.5-5.5 percent for the year.

Citing the latest data on inflation from the National Statistics Office, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri yesterday said the higher inflation in November was due to the increase in the prices of food, fuel and lights.

Consumer prices last month likewise inched up by an average of 0.3 percent month-on-month, lower than the 0.5 percent rate in October.

Neri pointed out that on a monthly basis, the uptick in inflation was brought by the significant increase in the price of food, beverages and tobacco (0.5 percent).

He added that prices of several food staples were up, specifically fruits and vegetables (2 percent), corn (10.7 percent), fish (10.7 percent) and meat (one percent).

He said that the cost of housing and repair (however increased by 0.1 percent from the previous month due to higher prices of cement and other construction materials.

The uptick in the index for electricity was experienced only in areas outside of Metro Manila as the Energy Regulatory Commission granted price adjustments to some firms in a staggered way.

But Neri pointed out that inflation remains within the government's target range.

"In general, prices in areas outside of Metro Manila remained unchanged while prices of major food and non-food items in Metro Manila went up by 0.5 percent," he said.

Neri explained that there was a month-on-month increase in the prices of agricultural products caused mainly by higher prices in Metro Manila.

"In general, prices in areas outside of Metro Manila remained unchanged while prices of major food and non-food items in Metro Manila went up by 0.5 percent," he said.

Neri explained that there was a month-on-month increase in the prices of agricultural products caused mainly by higher prices in Metro Manila. Prices of several products such as eggs (8.9 percent), fish (8.9 percent), meat (1.9 percent) as well as fruits and vegetables (1.3 percent).

Prices of food as well as transportation and communication also increased from the previous month.

US firms still bullish on RP

By Michelle F. Baron

AMERICAN firms remain confident in the Philippines' business climate and are committed to continue investing in the country despite the perceived instability caused by the coming elections and peace and order concerns.

Robert Wasko, chair of the American Chamber of Commerce trade and investment committee, said in a statement that US companies were keen on maintaining their positions as the biggest foreign investors and enabling partners of businesses in the Philippines.

Wasko said American investments in the country were now increasing, especially in the area of information technology, which he said was underpinning the "magic of this city."

The country's call center, business process outsourcing, and other services industry — which emerged in the late 1990s and in which large American companies have invested tens of millions of dollars — has also helped the country's growing reputation as a center for

Banks' dollar deposits rose to $12.7B in November

By Clarissa S. Batino

BANKS' outstanding dollar deposits stood at $12.7 billion as of Nov. 21, up by $401 million or 3.46 percent from $12.30 billion a year ago, latest data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas showed.

Dollars kept in banks' foreign currency deposit units (FCDUs) were also higher by $451.69 million from $12.6 billion a week ago, according to the BSP.

"The steady growth of the FCDU level of banks is reflective of the continuing confidence of depositors in the banking system," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said.

The central bank values the stable FCDU deposits as these complement the country's international reserves of $16.6 billion as of mid-November.

The peso yesterday closed slightly weaker at 55.28 to a dollar from 55.275 last Thursday. Businessmen said by now confidence that the local currency would continue to recover and firm up to the 55.20 level by year's end.

He said he believed the peso would remain "stable in current levels even in the first quarter of 2004."

But the substantial increase in FCDU deposits this year alerted the central bank to the question of how investors of buying dollars in the spot market, placing them temporarily in dollar accounts, and then using the funds to buy dollar-denominated sovereign debt papers.

While rising dollar deposits signal a stable capital flow, the increasing level has somewhat surprised monetary regulators.

In early September, the policy-making Monetary Board issued a circular prohibiting local investors from buying dollars from the spot market and using the same to invest in government bonds.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Lopez said the week-on-week movement in November reflected the usual transactions and the central bank did not spot any irregularity.

HPI project seen to post ₱500M in revenue

LUISLIM, estate developer Highlands Prime Inc. yesterday reported that its maiden project—The Woodridge in ghala Tagaytay Highlands—was now 65 percent sold, only a year after its launching.

HPI, which is controlled by retail tycoon Henry Sy, told the Philippine Stock Exchange that the first four of 90 units put up for sale was recently turned over to the new owners.

The project was launched in October last year and the construction of the first 12 units was finished in 10 months. Two other buildings consisting of 40 units will be completed in the next two months, HPI added.

The Woodridge is a complex of medium density condominium buildings. HPI expects ₱500 million in revenue from the sale of these units this year.

The project owners (units and other more structures with the natural contours of the mountain to create a tiered, flower-strewn landscape that aims to provide maximum privacy to residents.

HPI is also building model homes in the Tagaytay Midlands subdivision.

The company began construction operations in February last year and delivered on the second house of the PHU in April last year.

Last year, HPI registered net revenues of ₱90 million, resulting in a gross profit of ₱32 million and a net income of ₱11 million.

The company was created by Belle Corp. to continue the development of Tagaytay Highlands leisure estate over the next 50 years. It has authorized capital stock of ₱1 billion. —Boris C. Donato

No glut, no glory

BREAKTIME

Conrado E. Banal III

SCIENCE still cannot explain it, but here in the Philippines, mankind always yields to this need to build things, particularly in the last few months before … well, the elections.

In the streets of Metro Manila, for one, you can see construction workers doing nothing but digging everything on site that does not even exist yet.

Just when you start to think that all the diggings are done, in no time at all, you then see the construction workers move on and do some more diggings.

No, the people who live or work or shop in Pasig City, luckily thank the bright guys behind the construction of a flyover on Ortigas Avenue across J. Vargas Street.

Both the timing and the planning are impeccable—an ultra-lane avenue, no prior warning, no traffic counter plan, and no timetable. What else is new?

And they must begin construction just when the usual heavy traffic in the area is about to become, ahh, absolutely horrendous during the Christmas season.

* * *

WE always have a faint insurrection boom prior to elections. Always! Yet nobody can cry if some politicos just need the kickbacks to finance their campaigns.

Surprisingly cement prices are holding. Despite the pre-election public works frenzy, cement prices are the lowest in the region and among the lowest in the world.

That's why a Japanese company called Southern Cross Cement Corp. thinks that only it, among the many players in the cement industry, including the users, has the guts to achieve glory by doing something about the silly low prices.

Unit found out that Southern Cross is moving heaven and earth, plus its various lawyers, to pressure the DTI to remove the tariff on cement importation.

If the company succeeds and Trade Secretary Jake Bunsan lifts the defensive 30th-per-ton tariff on cement, the local cement industry is certain to die.

With the death of the local makers, cement importers like Southern Cross will then dictate the prices. Of course they will bring the prices up to the stratosphere.

* * *

NOW Southern Cross is the local subsidiary of Taiheyo Cement. This is the largest cement maker in Japan. There, they only happen to have a gloriously huge cement glut.

Moreover, the whole region is making more cement than it can use, creating a total glut of 200 million tons every year.

The glut alone is some 17 to 18 times any total market here. If we open our doors to that kind of glut, the local industry will be buried alive.

Only last June, no wonder, Bunsan imposed a definitive tariff on cement, as a way to defend the local industry against "dumping."

Some cement importers of course claimed that the measure would bring up cement prices. It was just a bluff.

Today, as I said, local cement prices are the lowest in the region. They are even 25 percent lower than the prices before we applied the Bunsan defense.

* * *

AGAIN from the drop in prices, which is good for those building their dream houses, the cement industry sees now a little hope for survival. Meaning, no more buy-offs!

Southern Cross perhaps does not like the situation. In a recent public hearing with the DTI, the lawyers of Southern Cross attacked the Bunsan-imposed tariff.

News accounts talked about the hearing as having been filled to 500-capacity. Labor, industry and consumer groups were present.

Everybody in the hearing was in favor of the tariff, except the busy lawyers of Southern Cross, who have been filing cases after cases against Bunsan.

But then they chose to articulate their argument in a "position paper." The lawyers would not be bothered to, er, "articulate" their position during the hearing.

Persons in the hearing were only the people who would lose their jobs, if Bunsan listened to the lawyers, and he allowed the local cement industry to die.

* * *

ANYWAY, the story of the cement industry is typical of the one-way street in the international trade liberalization in the glorious name of globalization.

And so the Japanese company wants this country to open up its market to Japanese cement. Yet the cement market in Japan is as tightly closed as a tomb.

To deliver cement to Japan, for instance, you need terminals. There, they do not buy cement by the bags. More than 90 percent of the market uses bulk cement.

Thus you need the terminals, which luckily are controlled by the Japanese cement companies, which in turn do not allow anybody else to use them.

By sheer stroke of luck, in a happy coincidence, the Japanese government does not issue new permits for cement terminals.

There is just one way for Philippine cement manufacturers to get into the Japanese market. And that is, someday we just have to conquer and occupy Japan.

* * *

COME on, it is impossible for local cement companies to sell to Japan. Except Cross sees no problem. Bunsi, we have to open up our market to Japanese cement.

Countries like ours, in other words, must follow the WTO, which dictates that trade measures of its members be "transparent, nonsuing, all done through tariffs."

Because we believe in the WTO, we follow its commandments. Rich countries like Japan don't have to, because they can always resort to non-tariff trade barriers.

Besides, all other countries in Asia already tried to limit their cement importation by imposing tariff way up to the neighboring points.

Taiwan imposes a 100-percent tariff on Philippine cement, for instance. Malaysia has 50 percent, and Vietnam, 40 percent.

Obviously everybody else is relying on defense for a chance to win a little in this beggar-thy-neighbor cement trade game. Everybody, except the Philippines!

* * *

SC least that's what the Filipino lawyers of Southern Cross wanted Bunsi to do. In effect, they wanted to flood the local market with the cement glut from Japan.

Bunsi said that the glut in Japan is about 15 million tons, which is actually nothing compared to the 200 million ton glut in the region.

But taken alongside the Philippine market, the glut in Japan is bigger than the bellies of our potato patriots. Our market is only 12 million tons a year.

As they said in the recent DTI hearing, if only 5 percent of the region's glut finds a way into the local market, we are dead.

For that is already 10 million tons, versus the local market of 11 million tons. And where will we pick up the local industry—from all the diggings in the streets?

Busted alive at this time, the local cement industry can never hope to recover. There go thousands of jobs. There also go our hope to build our dream houses.

A clear example of what happens when the local industry is allowed to die, and we just rely on imports, can be seen in coffee.

Today, with National Steal gone, the prices of steel products are up by 30 percent. Most of them are, of course, imported.

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BSP accredits local rating agency

THE POLICYMAKING Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has accredited Philippine Rating Service Corp. or Philratings to do credit rating on domestic banks.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said monetary authorities had authorized Philratings to assess the creditworthiness of domestic financial institutions in terms of their compliance with BSP requirements.

Philratings can now rate the commercial paper and other debt instruments issued by banks.

Philratings, according to BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes, met all accreditation requirements imposed by the Board, including the level of capitalization. It also has a pool of well-trained analysts and professional staff with the required five-year experience in rating banks and financial institutions.

Reyes noted that a rating firm's independence was also important. So accredited rating agency should not be affiliated with any bank or financial institution.

Buenaventura said Philratings was the first credit rating agency to be duly recognized by the BSP under its guidelines. — Clarissa S. Balbuena

Finance wants RP to remain under IMF monitoring

By Clarissa S. Balbuena

THE SECRETARY of finance (concerns) said it would support the extension of the country's infant post-program monitoring arrangement with the International Monetary Fund in view of the perceived political revitalization.

"We believe that there is a need for us to remain under the IMF monitoring especially the migrators of volatility," said Finance Officer-in-Charge Juanita Amatong.

However, the finance chief cleared that the Philippines had no intention of asking any financial assistance from the IMF.

"The decision on the extension will be jointly made by the IMF and the Philippines after an ongoing review of the country's performance by an IMF team, according to a central bank official. The review is scheduled to end earlier. In

"We have no intention of going back into any loan arrangement with the IMF. But I think a monitoring should be maintained because it is important for the investors," added the finance official.

Bros Concepcion, managing director of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, said that a letter that the IMF and the Philippine government would consider in determining the direction of the monitoring arrangement was the unanimity of the country's fiscal discipline.

He added that while the country had reduced its obligations with the IMF to below 100 percent of the quota, this was not the only factor that would be considered in making the decision.

"The IMF will also assess whether the Philippines is ready to get out of the IMF. We should have a credible economic and fiscal program to ensure sustainability. And one of their concerns is the fiscal sector, especially in 2004," said Concepcion.

"There is no doubt now that we will meet the P202-billion deficit target this year but the issue lies on next year's performance," added the BSP official.

Concepcion said there was no reason for the Philippines not to terminate the post-program monitoring that IMF usually wanted to.

Napocor to tap coal supply from South Africa, 2 others

By Russell W. Domingo

NATIONAL Power Corp. (napocor) is now diversifying its sources of coal in anticipation of a cut in supply from China, currently its main source of coal.

Napocor president Angelo M. Bhangwani is concerned that the company was moving to secure coal imports from Australia, South Africa and Russia as well as additional volumes from Indonesia.

"[The company] needs more flexibility in choosing its coal supplies," Macapinlac said.

The statement came in the wake of a possible cut in China's coal exports due to a directive from the State Council of China ordering Chinese coal producers to prioritize local demand.

Despite this, Bhangwani said Napocor had also extended out three of its existing Indonesian suppliers—PT Indominco, PT Arutmin and PT Jorong—for additional shipments.

He said further that Napocor had asked for the Department of Energy's go-ahead for the importation of coal from alternative sources.

Napocor is planning to conduct a limited bidding for Australian and Indonesian suppliers in the meantime, he said.

Coal accounts for the biggest share of Napocor's power generation mix.

In the first half of 2003, coal-fired plants represented 32.37 percent of the mix. For the whole of 2002, coal accounted for 37.82 percent of Napocor's power generation mix.

The tight supply of coal from China has prompted Napocor to increase its budget for the usual 625,000-ton conversion to 1.6 million (about 3984 million) from P1.0 million (about P600 million).

Bush lifts steel tariffs in face of threatened global trade war

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush scrapped import tariffs he had imposed last year to help the battered US steel industry, defusing a threatened trade war with Europe, Japan and South Korea.

Bush declared Thursday that the 21 months the steep tariffs had been in place had given the US industry a chance to reestablish itself and modernize and "now no longer needed as a result of changed economic circumstances."

Within minutes, the European Union said it was withdrawing its $2.2 billion list of targeted products.

"These sanctions ... were there as a tool for compliance," EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy said Thursday. "They've complied, and the sanctions will disappear."

Japan and South Korea also backed away from a threat to penalize US imports with retaliatory tariffs.

However, the decision prompted an angry response from the US steel industry and its political supporters, who accused Bush of breaking a campaign promise and turning his back on an industry that was still in need of protection from unfair foreign competition.

"It is rich to appease the Europeans and the Japanese, Mr. Bush—blithely ignoring the fact that damage to the American steel industry and American steel communities continues to this day," said Leo McGrath, president of the United Steelworkers of America. Grand said: 42 steel companies had gone bankrupt over the past five years.

Senator Robert Byrd said the Bush administration "shattered my credibility it ever had with the steel industry in West Virginia and across the country."

Imposing the tariffs had won the presidency support in steel states such as West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania, all considered important to his reelection chances next year. But that action had not just incensed trade heavyweights that were forced to pay higher prices because of the protective tariffs.

Bush's action also was criticized by domestic companies that rely on steel imports.

Ronnie Arnauer Gov. Howard Dean said that despite Bush's claims, "the steel industry needs additional breathing room to get back on its feet." Congressmen Rob Cuyahoga said: Bush's action demonstrated a "ruthless disregard for the workers and the communities whose jobs and livelihoods have been decimated by unfair competition," Former Sen. Wesley Clark said Bush traveled to "future to the 2.6 million manufacturing workers who've lost their jobs" while he has been in office.

However, Republican free-trade supporters and industries hurt by the steel tariffs praised Bush's decision, saying it had averted a debilitating tit-for-tat fight with some of America's biggest trading partners. AP

TOP Chinese-steel makers, including Baosteel, welcomed the US decision to scrap controversial tariffs on steel imports, saying it could prop up their bottom lines.

Sony changes 'Made in Japan' tag

TOKYO—For Sony Corp., it's been the same problem for the last decade: half of its electronics manufacturing now come from Japan, compared to only 30 percent of revenues.

But not for long. Sony's "Sony Shock"—a $1 billion loss for the fourth quarter—the electronics and entertainment giant says it must now solve this problem, once and for all.

"For some simple items, we can buy a machine, train an operator and it doesn't have to be made in Japan," Sony's chief production officer, Minoru Morita, told listeners in an interview last week.

A remedy of job cuts, plant closures and a shift in China would be a bitter pill to swallow for Sony.

Japan's electronics industry must balance a need to shift production overseas to be price competitive against Asian rivals with cost-effectiveness Japanese consumers concerned about a hollowing-out of the country's manufacturing sector.

Hitachi Ltd., Japan's biggest electronics maker by revenues, runs the slogan "Inter. Made in Japan," but plans to manufacture 60 percent of its white goods overseas by 2005 compared with 40 percent now.

Sony intends to halt production of bulky cathode ray tube televisions for commercial use at two domestic plants this year and cut 20,000 jobs, including 7,000 in Japan.

Morita, 64, who spearheaded a team of engineers to develop Sony's "Handycam" video camera in the 1980s, now runs three production units at least of the company's Engineering Manufacturing and Technology Services (EMCS) division.

"It might not be the best idea to make the same products in our five regions (Japan, the United States, Europe, Asia and China). Instead, we should consider each region play a different role," said the silver-haired Morita.

This change in philosophy is a core aspect of Sony's Groupwide restructuring plan, which it hopes will lift operating profit to 13 percent of sales in 2006/07 from 2.3 percent last year.

Its goal is to slash 60 billion yen, 10 percent of group sales, in annual fixed costs by 2006/07 through a 30 percent reduction in flow space for service, distribution and production and a 9% percent cut in the number of parts used. Reuters

Asia-Pacific welcomes US' decision on steel

TOKYO—Asia-Pacific countries on Friday hailed US President George W. Bush's decision to end illegal tariffs on steel imports as a vindication for free trade rules.

Japan led the chorus of cheers, saying it was pleased with the decision but cautioned it would keep a close watch on US monitoring of steel imports, which it warned could be used to protect the US steel sector.

New Zealand said the US decision was in line with the tariff's ruling by the World Trade Organization while South Korea said it would help to facilitate free trade.

The US decision came in response to a ruling earlier this month through the WTO dispute settlement system by eight countries including Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and China.

Bush announced Thursday he would rescind the tariffs. He had had little choice after the WTO ruled last month that they were illegal and trade trading partners vowed massive retaliation.

Yoshi Fukada, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, said Tokyo "greatly welcomed" the US decision, saying the country had dropped a threat made last week to impose retaliatory sanctions.

"We highly appreciate the fact that President Bush believes in free trade," he said, while stating a lingering concern over the import monitoring system the US says will be maintained.

In its announcement Thursday, the Bush administration promised to intensify monitoring to ensure any surge in steel imports after the tariffs are lifted.

An official at the steel division of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said: "We do not consider that monitoring system a protectionist measure but said it keep a close watch on it to prevent it from being used to protect the domestic industry."

The official also noted the US safeguards had prompted other nations to impose similar special tariffs on steel imports.

"The large flow measures ... namely China ... will stop the trade barriers," he said.

China, for its part, made no comment Friday on the US change of heart, although it applauded the WTO ruling last month that US steel tariffs violated global trading rules.

New Zealand Trade Negotiations Minister Jim Sutton said the US decision was "a victory for New Zealand and the rules-based system which the WTO represents."

"The successful result in the steel case now shows the benefits of the WTO dispute settlement system for New Zealand are not limited to the agricultural sector," Sutton said. AFP

US firms . . .

From page B1

owners in this said sector.

Blume added that the electronics manufacturing industry which accounts for about 70 percent of Philippine exports and more than 200,000 workers in the country, would further develop and possibly target foreign markets.

Although some foreign companies in the Philippines are relocating their manufacturing facilities to other countries, Blume said they were poised to keep their marketing activities.

Analysts claim the legislative affairs John Forbes, however said the government and the private sector should exert more effort in improving the country's competitiveness to attract more foreign investments.

He said the country should address various issues concerning business, and undertake reforms that would make it easier for foreign companies to set up offices here.

Japan economy keeps growth momentum

TOKYO—Japan's economic recovery is keeping up its momentum on the back of robust exports and better company profits, but consumer spending remains depressed, government data suggested on Friday.

The diffusion index of leading economic indicators for October rose to 68.9 ... the highest since February 2000—from a revised 60.7 a month before.

The leading index, measured on a scale of 100 and compiled using data such as the number of new job offers, consumer sentiment and Tokyo share prices, signals economic conditions over the next few months.

It is the sixth straight month in which it has been at or above the neutral 50 level, which marks the difference between an expected economic expansion or a contraction in coming months.

"This suggests that economic activity will continue to expand in the near term," said Ryo Kiso, an economist at JP Morgan.

The coincident index, which indicates current economic conditions, shot up to 100 from a revised 91.9 in September, the Cabinet Office said.

The indices are regarded as reliable and the Cabinet Office review them several times before issuing final figures.

The Cabinet Office official warned against being too optimistic.

"The strong figures do not mean the economy is without problems," he said.

Household spending data, announced separately, highlighted that slow economic demand continues to be one of the weakest areas of Japan's economy.

Overall household spending fell 0.8 percent in October from the same month last year in real terms.

The average household spent 301,404 yen ($2,705) during the month. On a seasonally adjusted basis, spending fell a real 1.2 percent from September.

Other data later suggested the economy is still recovering but at a slower pace than earlier this year.

A survey by the Ministry of Finance on Thursday showed that business sentiment improved in the October-December for the first time in 11 quarters.

But capital spending was a meager 0.4 percent in July-September from the same period last year, compared with a 6.4 percent rise in April-June. Some economists said that showed the pace of recovery was slowing.

Separate data showed little reaction in Friday's data, with workers citing greater interest in Middle East violence and US payroll data. Reuters

China soon to be 4th biggest exporter

BEIJING—Trade juggernaut China is set to become the world's fourth largest trading nation this year, overtaking France to claim it behind only the United States, Japan and Germany, state media said Friday.

Vice Commerce Minister Wei Jianguo hailed the milestone on the country's rapidly surging shipments of electronics and merchandise so far in 2003, the China Daily reported.

"At (the current) rate, China's rank in the world trading community will rise to fourth by the end of the year," the newspaper said, quoting Wei.

According to figures from the World Trade Organization (WTO), China was the world's fifth largest merchandise exporter in 2002 with $325.6 billion.

That put it right behind France, with $330.8 billion, and well ahead of Britain, with $279.6 billion.

It is including trade in services, and leaving out imports, however, Wei drew a richer measure for China's trade performance.

If both exports and imports in goods and services are included, China remained behind Britain and France in 2002 and looks unlikely to catch up for a year.

According to this broader measure, Chinese imports and exports totaled $596.7 billion last year, making it number six in the world.

The same set of WTO data showed Britain ahead in 2003 with trade amounting to $649.4 billion, followed by France with $615.2 billion.

If China is indeed to make history and outpace Germany in terms of merchandise this year, special credit is likely to go to Chinese producers of machinery and electronics.

Exports of machinery and electronics products rose 62.3 percent to ¥170.65 billion in the first 10 months.

For the full year, that particular category of merchandise is likely to exceed $190 billion, Wei said, according to the newspaper. AFP

DISCLOSURES

SM Prime Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 28, 2 p.m. with record date on Feb. 13. The company declared a cash dividend of P0.30 per share to those of stockholders of record as of Dec. 18 and will be payable on Jan. 28.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Dealers Corp. disclosed the resignation of Enrico Hollas as assistant vice president for finance of the company.

* * *

ELECTED officers of **CHEMP Group Corp.** were Pedro Rivera, executive chairman and Miguel Campos, president and CEO.

* * *

PCI Leasing and Finance Inc. bought 10,000 of its own shares at P1.20 per share. Compiled by Marisa E. Tolosa, PDI Research

Currencies

December 5, 2003 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
Australia	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Bahrain	Dinar	0.000000	2.000000	69.000000
Brunei/Singapore	Dollar	1.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Hongkong	Dollar	1.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Indonesia	Rupiah	1,000.000000	1.000000	42.000000
Canada	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000000	2.000000	69.000000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Thailand	Baht	1.000000	1.000000	35.000000
United Arab Emirates	Dirham	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
United Kingdom	Pound	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
United States	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Euro	Euro	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Switzerland	Franc	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Japan	Yen	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Australia	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Taiwan	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Korea	Won	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
China	Yuan	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Hongkong	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
India	Rupee	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Israel	Shekel	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Jordan	Dinar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Lebanon	Pound	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Mexico	Peso	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
New Zealand	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Norway	Krone	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Pakistan	Rupee	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Russia	Ruble	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Singapore	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Sweden	Krona	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Switzerland	Franc	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Syria	Pound	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Taiwan	Dollar	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000
Thailand	Baht	0.000000	1.000000	35.000000

SATURDAY

Reinventing Pinoy TV

We need not be endlessly in love with F4

By Lino Cayetano
Contributor

HOLLYWOOD movies invaded our decades ago and international pop icons from Elvis to Britney Spears have always been well-accepted, in fact idolized, by us Pinoys. Our dominant philosophical and political thoughts came from the West, and outside forces have long dictated our economic policies. We prefer imported products to our own, even as multinational companies turn us into a single consumer statistic. In short, in this country that we call our own, there is a lot that isn't ours. But like it or not, one of the few things that are truly Pinoy is local television entertainment!

You don't have to be a TV junkie to be familiar with Sunday afternoon variety shows, in which our favorite artists sing and dance in elaborate production numbers that have been an industry staple from the days of Nilda, through Sharon, to today's young stars. And while soaps have long been relegated to mid-afternoon face in other countries, we have taken pride in a soap opera-crazy citizenship, from the crowds that loved curses de Belen in "Flor de Luna," to the sold-lit lovers of Claudine Barretto and Zoilus Magdangal in more current taken on real-life melodrama. In fact, it looks like soaps are here to stay. In fact lately time in this country it has long been taken side by side with the latest gimmicks, contests, dance numbers and stunts in ushering both artistic and "lucky" fans in musicine reality shows.

Local television has produced a wide range of shows that continue to entertain us, preserve history for other generations, and keep denizens of the industry employed. And though the past few years have shown a trend toward the gaining popularity of imported shows, the local industry seems unaffected. It is in fact easy to argue that these new foreign shows, from Taboan and Stores of late, have conditioned the market to accept new ideas and formats. They have opened homemade shows to experimentation. Aside from these "creative" benefits, it is also understandable that these new breed of shows are big income earners for the stations.

Admittedly it takes no small effort to obtain the license for a foreign television show, dub and edit it for Filipino consumption, and still to be a tough market. But it still circuits consistently has work, and definitely less expensive, than producing our own versions to avoid the international shows in quality of form and content. What we "lose" in time and money, we gain in the advancement of local television.

Pinoy "show biz" may be old and strong, but it isn't perfect or fully evolved. Often overlooked is the potential advancement of the Filipino manner of storytelling, communicating ideas, and discussing relationships and issues that are close to the heart of the average Pinoy. The themes are universal—love, hope and sorrow are emotions that are understood by everyone on the planet. Still, certain things are said, heard and felt better when spoken, written, directed and acted out by actors who understand us most.

Maybe the Filipino viewer is looking for something different. Maybe they are bored with what local TV has been dishing out. Maybe they are asking for something new, something fresh, a different take from 24 years of mind-numbing melodrama. And isn't this something we can, and should be able to, produce? A healthy society is able to balance commerce and ideas. We learn a lot from watching foreign films and shows, but we shouldn't be afraid to experiment on our own.

The local entertainment industry is at a crossroads. Do we take a step forward into what is logical, inevitable and financially rewarding, or do we take a step back and assess what the phenomenon and its possible future did towards may be doing to the very future of Filipino entertainment? If the Pinoy viewer is searching for something new, our entertainment industry should be up to the challenge of finding it.

Television and movies are primarily tools of entertainment, but they are also potent tools of thought and ideas.

SONIC BOOM: From the world to your ears

Beats without borders

HOP ON. Welcome to the global caravan

MANU CHAO is the new Bob Marley.

At a bus stop in Damascus I met a Welsh couple who, on that sweltering June evening, were singing Chris Isaac out to "Clandestino," the title track of Manu Chao's first-ever CD. In the years that I spent as a vagabond, I had heard more than a few echoes of Manu Chao's mainstream-ish, musical postcards, so it wasn't a total shocker. From grungy dives in Munich to one-thatched cafés in Dahab, the co-lead singer of one of France's most successful groups, Mano Negra, and his brand of alternative dub-reggae had hijacked jukeboxes to become the nomadic generation's default soundtrack. It was high time that someone new provided the chorus for our transcontinental adventures. Bob Marley was becoming too much of a cliché and Jimmy M was just plain cheesy.

I came this discovery to my German friend Nubia, a veteran navigator of the planet and a "Grilfil Belly" survivor. I've always balanced the street-and-peasant music of FM radio with pleasantly exotic sounds, but I had never tripped over something indigenous to names like Manu Chao's fourth-favorite symphonies. That began the enhanced state of my musical hygiene.

Lo-fi, high brow

I don't know what's in the water in Europe that makes the citizens, particularly Scandinavians, so farsickingly cool. My roommate Ralfe introduced me to "Crashing Vets With Girls," a CD brimming with lo-fi dance music by Emil Nobel—an electronic act from his hometown, Helsinki. That soon became a favorite. Before this, I never knew Finland had exports other than vodka, rare air delivery, and mobile phones so big you hit the Boss like an Arms used. Jasper, our Danish cinéaste, contributed to my education by exposing me to the smaller parts of Brigitte. He took me downtown, right off the Universidad de las Artes, to a place called Quinta Cairo. From the outside, it looked like the washrooms in "Trainspotting," but with a worn-out velvet rope and a $10 cover charge. The inside, however, was pure dynamite. Predictably tight was when young people rush the mic-down salsa club homage and turned it into a confluence of the militant breakbeats of the idiosyncratic subgenre with bubsy salsa and touches of Bossacada. Tracing the lines of my unconsciousness, I used those memories as badges to complement my evolution as a gourmet music addict.

Jasset sounds

Borders always look so finite on a map; real life is more malleable. I wouldn't have had those cool-altering experiences if I hadn't limited myself to the mainstream-ed shores of the mainstream. One of my best friends in Canada is a girl named Fragrat, who was born in Algeria to East Indian parents, but was raised in England. In between classes, I'd beg her about sitars, tablas and arranged marriages—stuff that most Hollywood director are made of. So it made me emotionally happy to receive an "affair of Indian vibes on a low jams I've heard lately. Nitin Sawhney, a British producer who was never preoccupied with the notion of race in music, takes the tabla and melds it with Jamie Woodies-like vocals on the splendid-ly "Kaleidoscope." An even more ambitious expedition into the back alleys of the past yields "Beware of the Boys," a prime cut from Panjabi MC. Constantly sampling the "Knight Rider" theme and browning vocals by Lisbi Joshua and Jay-Z, this track is at the forefront of England's emerging bhangra-infused 'nth (rhythm and beat) scene.

William James, father of American Psychology, said, "As you think, so shall you be." Pervading the indelible effect of this quotation on my musical proliferation, I hope to one day become like Cibo Matto, an esteemed music outfit with a decidedly international pedigree. As also been Radio 1's "Worldwide," the oldest and slickest show in the UK. After hitting upon this sonorific manna from heaven, I couldn't bear to listen to any more broken, soulless pop. My brain has stretched to superhuman dimensions and I don't think it can ever shrink back to its previous size. This transcendental detachment would probably make Siddhartha, or Tom Cruise, weep with pride.

Christmastime stretch

More than a throwback to the year that just zipped by, I tend to cleanse my palate during the Christmastime stretch to prepare for the ear caviar that's just around the corner. As a self-improvement machine on autopilot, my gaze is firmly set on further future such as Africa and New Zealand. In the coming years, I believe these barbarians will produce more exquisite memorabilia apart from Baaba Maal, Geoffrey Oryema and Chris Martin's hand, and The Dolmens, Bic Runga and Sarah Mia on the other. I also plan to augment my urban-ethnic music anthology with **Denmark's Medjac**, **Mexico's Julieta Venegas** and more Talib Kweli remixes. But the biggest avalanche of inspirations I'm bracing myself for comes from the Philippines. Great-hearting salvoes like Bamboo and Sandy B have stirred up my interest and I'd like them to be part of my phat global caravan as well.

Back to Español vanguards Aterciopelados dispersed Andrea de Saint-Exupery-style over my window on "El Estanque." They sang, "Mira la cocoon, no la aparteneis/ Look into the cocoon of something, not at the surface." Now that the phase is accepting global fusion as a fact—and shaking its booty to a tapestry of transcultural confections—this heads up wouldn't have been more appropriate.

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

NO MENTIRA. Manu Chao is the backpacker's favorite

Seeing red

I ONCE queued up for the ATM on a typical lunch hour, behind two attractive, well-dressed girls, one of whom was munching away on potato chips. To keep my mind occupied, I allowed my thoughts to drift on to fast food kinchi, yet I snapped right back to reality when, to my sore horror, the potato chip-chomping chick casually tossed the empty packet on the floor. To add insult to a bleeding wound, there was a trash can half the size of the cash machine right beside her.

I tried to vent my anger at, for definitely one of my personal Ten Commandments, on how to live a beautiful life: "Only the ugly bitch" but I tapped the girl on the shoulder, admirably a little hard – if not necessary, and asked in the calmest possible voice, "Did you just throw your garbage on the floor?" Sure, if there's a trash can right there?" Surprised, the girl blushed like mad and mockingly replied, "No." That was when

JOLLY old Jack Malvaso, anger management specialist

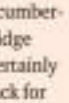
in the PMS line in my system. All my imagined lines like chill flow on the window, and I nicely told her, "Is it imagined the whole thing? But think I'm blind? I can't believe you're even attempting to do so now!" Are you waiting for your cues to pick up after you?" I guess my public outburst reverberated but, as she sheepishly retrieved her rubbish and threw it in the bin, as they walked away flouting the ATM line at least I heard her friend say, "I told you."

Days later, I was still dwelling on that little episode, feeling a little guilty for embarrassing the girl that way. I asked my personal psychiatrists, a.k.a., my closest friends, if I had done the right thing. One said I didn't have to do embarrass her like that, a few others said they would have done the same thing, and another said more people should speak up against such public misbehavior.

Pro-fit

I must confess that I'm someone who sincerely wants to live out a low-stressed, cool-as-a-cucumber-in-the-fridge lifestyle. I do have a knack for losing it every now and then.

I often get frustrated in the metro. Bumper drivers, anyone, no matter how many brake ads adorn the walls—not to keep their cell phones to themselves. Or



Tats Diaz

For someone who wants to live out a cool-as-a-cucumber-in-the-fridge lifestyle, I certainly have a knack for losing it now and then

some worked when I saw an armored mother allowing her kid to urinate right outside the mall, or face to face to find shoppers pausing by? Oh, and bell back on key than are aggravated by traffic cops awkwardly concealing proceeds of bribery after flagging me down by saying, "Ma'am, may ilang pa-sun ...." Come to think of it, maybe I should consider giving a' Jack Nicholson a call and ask him to move in with me for some extreme Anger Management moments.

Hot tips

A helpful little adventure manual, "The Traveler's Guide to Hell," by Dana Facaros and Michael Pauls, offers an interesting piece of advice regarding the sin of Anger. It says this is the one sin that most likely hurts other people, especially when directed by another sin. Writing angry will envy, for example, results in emotional robbery.

For the angry tourist thinking of ravaging the metaverse of the next restaurant-(-) hour it's all the rage for certain officials in government), yet another unnamed scribe with a preference for hot destinations: Dante, dante there's a great one at the Silver Eyes in the dining-rated 5th circle. There, you'll enjoy the company of some sizzling girls named Medusa and the Furies, right before you get dismembered after for your ways on earth.

I try to keep these bits of info in mind especially now that I've achieved Jing-Gin in my personal anger management therapy—admitting I have a problem. But is expressing anger always a wrong thing? Is anger really a hard-nosed player in the winning seven lineup of Team Virtue? I always try to know that the 5th circle is reserved for the rudest, or those too wimpy to err on their anger or injustices witnessed.

So one rainy night, an asinine atrocious behavior in public. This is not limited by social strata. Pre-sex performance by corrupt traffic agent, smoke-belching vehicle, people coming in line or spitting, or restaurant patron wearing sunkist rudeness. We accuse them do not fall to become angry enough to correct such unwarranted actions, perhaps in the name of saving face, or worse, assigning ourselves to be the moral police. Sometimes we're just so used to the shabby state of affairs. But then become guilty of complacency. We were raised by two words particular to our culture that attempt to absolve guilt: "Bahala na"—leave it to God. Not realizing that evince quick-sighted can have a boomerang.

Thus, I am fully convinced that one also lies in a deficiency of anger. The poet Orphan Thomas once penned in "Rage against the dying of the light." "Where we accept appalling things as part of everyday life, do we not become shadows in the darkness as well? Where would we be today if Gloal wasn't angry enough to channel his noble ire into words? The last thing we feel rage toward a higher ideal within us has been challenged. Say it shouldn't end with inertia. Real change must be the agenda.

Cool live

To not saying we should all become angry people, inhabited by every goon encounter, rampaging in the name of righteousness. Anger can be expressed in non-violent ways (hello, Gandhi!), it is possible to act out anger with some degree of serenity. We once proved that a revolution need not be sacred cut with bloodshed. Perhaps our challenge today is to demonstrate that a revolution doesn't need a minimum number A revolution can happen with one.

A few days ago, I witnessed a well-bodied footwear manager in Shaw-Ininny-ness little boys hard on the head with a rolled up newspaper, for selling roses to customers dining outside. The faces of the guests gave away their disapproval on the manager's behavior, yet no one came up a word. A bunch of waiters nonchalantly shielded the urchins and bought their roses from each of them. She then quietly went up to the manager when no one was looking. My friend gave her one non-cool nod, "Miss, excuse, boss kung ako." The manager realized her mistake and apologized, saying that she was just looking after the guests. I was astounded at my friend's ability to expose her displeasure in such a tranquil way especially since I was ready to kill my opponent on the manager's hand.

Perhaps I still have a long way to go in learning how to light candles instead of setting off dynamite.

Email the author at tats_pr-angst@yahoo.com

SATURDAY Super

With MMDA's public urinals, it's like we've given Clark Kent a place to change into Superman. What about Darna?

URI-NATION

By Martin Valdes

IMAGINE Paradise. A virgin planet before the advent of civilization and technology. Earth is a newborn baby swaddled in brilliant colors, untouched by a past and oblivious to the future. Flora and fauna abound in riotous novelty and all of creation celebrates, for Bathala has molded man and woman in His image. One is a pillar of strength, his partner the embodiment of beauty.

Together, walking hand in unsullied hand, they survey the star domain, their divine benevolence. But all that does is compel within the coolness of a bamboo stalk but had a profound physiological effect on man. Now, with a chilly breeze tickling his naked parts, he yearns to do that over his sweet spots, a manly, reflexive scratch with branches like wing of the sky, and he leaves on it. So enraged Bathala reminds him that the Tree of Knowledge is not a commode, and sans him out of Paradise. To commemorate his fall from grace, man builds the first public urinal.

An excerpt from Legends of the Gulf, by my own fictionized imagination. While that was fiction, there is sufficient historical evidence to support the fact that public urinals are one of the oldest human inventions. Less evidenced than the Gutenberg printing press, but no-nonsensical than the wheel, less cataclysmic than gunpowder, and less lavish than the silk loom, the urinal is nevertheless considered the silent sidekick that has accompanied man throughout history. Whether sculpted in exquisite porcelain by a master craftsman, or crudely shoveled into shape by a desperate wino, the urinal is a necessity and a refuge for the weary traveler seeking solace and relief from the world around him, and the bladder within him.

Disturbing the piss

The Philippines has endured much controversy in the year 2003: transgressy social mores, political exposés, kidnappings, the flesh raid, a wilting currency and Joey Marquez courting sympathy from the arrested masses. Add to them the public urinals installed by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority—as if the citizens of this beleaguered country did not have enough to debate about. Why the furor concerning something quite insignificant compared to other national concerns, we might ask? What does this mean in the context of the Filipino psyche? And will the wells feel neglected henceforth? These are questions that cannot wait for the next commercial break.

The middle of the year saw the erection of 171 public urinals along major thoroughfares. MMDA chief Bayani Fernando says it was to promote hygiene by giving men an alternative to urinating just anywhere in public.

KRISTINGLE

Feds actual has its own septic tank to store waste and process it from directly pulling the "metropolis" water system. Made of aluminum sheets painted a hot pink, the MMDA claim that the design is also built to "withstand vandalism." I'm not sure what that means. The color probably fools vandals into thinking they could do no wrong. Aside from the aesthetic, the cost of each urinal has Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo demanding an P40,000-a piece!, one just has to wonder how much technology would possibly be involved in constructing a semi-circular booth of aluminum with a rubber funnel and a septic tank. That's a pretty expensive urinary project.

Of course the project is not without merit. The concept of public urinals is anything but ludicrous, and almost all civilized nations have them. The most obvious benefit is decency. Given a choice between an unbegetting wall and a private stall, the Pinoy will invariably choose the stall—unless it is an elevation pee and the wall is adorned with campaign posters. As we never had accessible public urinals in the past, the Pinoy has grown accustomed to vandalizing his pride and relieving himself in public. Once, while I was rushing to the United Room, I took a shortcut from Manila with one on a golf game. On the fourth hole, he walked over to some bushes and answered right there—on the golf course where Tiger Woods had won his first professional tournament. I was mortified. But my companion simply rocked in, zipped up and proceeded to play an excellent round.

Public hygiene is also a strong plus. While golf courses and the like may actually use some liquid fertilizing, city streets are not likely to. Asphalt neither absorbs nor breaks down the dangerous chemicals in urine, surrendering it instead to our already dubious water systems. The next time you take a shower, try not to remember this article. Unless have to contend with an odor of formidable partiality and resilience. The stench of urine, while comfortably familiar to the horse tracks of Baguio, is an unwelcome phantom haunting the cool skies of Manila.

Sort of all, our public urinals are free. Unlike the uncommon-use toilets of first world nations, the MMDA has anticipated that participants Filipinos will not spend money on a natural bodily process. Even if a mere 15 sq. across the wall and the stall, many will opt for free relief.

Urine trouble

But debate continues despite these convincing arguments. In sound earlier, the limited product does not answer to justify the production costs. Many have also suggested a whiff of corruption, and the MMDA is quick to counter-claim problem (soon again) are at the root of these rumors. In some areas, the residents have gone as far as removing the urinals in protest of ... well, I'm not sure what, exactly. Suffice to say, many remain planted still.

Also, the question of urinal preference has been brought up. Unlike public urinals abroad, which are unisex, the MMDA has exclusively erected male urinals. Mercurod them more, it has said in defense, citing. Madder sizes and other anatomical discrepancies between the genders. That may be true, but wouldn't it have been more convenient just the same to have unisex urinals? For every 50 men who have used a stall while waiting for a bus, I'm sure there are at least two women, who wished the same convenience was available to them. It's like we've given Clark Kent a place to change into Superman, what about Darna?

Oh little aside: I have noticed several vehicles parked on the side of EDSA, their drivers using the urinals. This is dangerous. I'm all for the comfortable driver, but pulling over on modern main highway while three-ton buses hurtle

Writings on the wall

SWAK!

by Lex

AS I took a pee in a public bathroom a few days ago, I saw the sign...

It stared me in the face, as though waiting to be noticed by me.

In big, bold letters it asked: WHY ARE YOU LOOKING HERE? ARE YOU ASHAMED OF IT?

Since the beginning of time man has defined the walls around him with messages for his fellow men. Cavemen drew pictures of the food they hunted ... probably to discourage them from hunger so days that they came home empty-handed. Likewise, in every single security guard house hang a calendar with a photograph of the day hours bold-ass to keep the men awake and daydreaming.

So graffiti on public bathroom walls reflect the country's current mindset? If so, is it an accurate reflection of the times?

Generation gap

In the 1960s, when sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll flourished, the international symbol for peace was plastered on every Volvo, wall, and VW van. "Make love, not war!" was the tenderest.

From the '70s to the '80s, these sentiments grew as leftists quietly plotted against the evil empire headed by the Big McCoy University of the Philippines campuses spawned graffiti galore, urging the populace to plot against the dictatorship. 'Mabuhay, Isang manifesto!' was chanted in the streets and scribbled by brave souls on public walls in the middle of the night.

By the time Ninoy Aquino was assassinated in '86, the mode of change had been planted. Along with yellow ribbons on trees and posts everywhere, exhortations on city walls expressed overwhelming sentiments — "Tama na! Sobra na! Palitan na!" "Hindi ko sinabing mahal kita" —and became the collective memoir of the suffering populace.

Recently, nourishing public bathroom walls for short-signs of the times, I was disappointed (and this is an understatement) to see the same message everywhere: 'For free sex, call 0919-xxxx or 0917-xxxx.

Apathy

More than anything, I hate it when people complain about the government and the lousy people in it, but when I ask, "So who are you voting for?" I get a blank look and then the mumbled answer: "I forgot to register, eh..."

In the 1960s, 'Peace!' and 'Make love, not war!' graffiti decorated city walls, including public toilets. Now it's, 'For free sex, call xxxx-xxx-xxxx,' especially in public toilets

A lot of people don't really care, and just hide behind the alibi that, regardless of who they vote for, the outcome would be the same anyway. I don't buy this. Surely some candidates are better than others. With someone incompetent in the helm, things would definitely deteriorate faster.

Beside "Why are you looking here? Are you ashamed of it?" was another sentence: "The future is in your hands."

Two thoughts raced in mind. First, who in heaven's name has time to think up puns to scribble on top of urinals? And does it get me thinking, the future is in my hands, indeed, and I am not going to waste it!

(For comments, e-mail author at swak@pinoy.com)

Uri-Nation

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on the same late delight—if I were the passenger in that cab, I'd need to use the armrest. I

Finally, the rider: a pink as first, it seems. Though quite recognizable for a male urinal, the MMDA chose this color for easy sighting. But sighted by whom? — a jet liner? A pedestrian who's going to miss a public urinal under Orbeta sanmadlagod as a telephone pole. Invisible beam, hell and piss on it. She debuts tapos ...

Let us not underestimate a man's relationship with a public urinal: he consecrates and here it is a place for renewing acquaintances, he meets students, it is a place for meditation, where we can stare at a fixed point in the wall or enjoy philosophical graffiti scribbled by others. Herbert Hunke, mayor to beat Jejomar made us furiously and thoroughly, did his best work in public urinals. Emmy Miller terror of his affection for a certain urinal in Ma'a. While the debate does not border on moral territory...not like we're discussing sex here, just piss on earth—public urination has ever been a trademark of the Filipino man. It is a tradition worthy of consideration and revision, but for better or worse, it is a cultural trait that identifies us. There is a consumer to subvert when a man contemplates the future that is in his hands.

So, I'm using a public urinal near the corner of EDSA and Ayala, when a bus pulls up beside me in a unload crowd passengers. On board, a gaggle of young girls start to giggle as they catch me going about my business. Refusing to be riled, I concentrate on the task at hand. The aim of the public urinal is to promote hygiene; my aim probably helps.

E-mail author at (uungnomad@yahoo.com.

THE ARTIST BRUIHN at work

INSPIRATION SANDWICH

Sensibly surreal BRUIHN

CARPE Diem

JOURNEY of the Traveler

SOLO La Muerte

Interview by Orvico Castrillo

It's said that the only way for anyone to learning anything. Constantly asking questions through his art, the surrealist painter Bryan Bruihn invites readers and patrons the imagination ... allowing others to share his very personal mental and artistic experiences.

What comes first, the theme/subject or the puzzle/logic/philosophical question?

It depends on the piece. Sometimes it's more of the poetry than reason first, and you don't exactly necessarily logically ... there's no logical meaning; it's only when you render it and all of a sudden you start looking for a connection. Once in a while, I do get something that is purely conceptual, purely logical, but it's harder to paint that because it's the poetry that keeps you going. The whole package is, you see the image, you see the background, you see what it's gonna look like and it'll move you.

Which took more time to develop, your skill as a painter, your skill in developing a provocative element, or your philosophy? And which is/was more rewarding?

I don't know if you can call it the philosophical part, but I think it would be the living part. I have to say that probably 40 percent would be the actual painting ... that is already a lot of time.

How did you evolve as an artist?

I am from Antipolo. There in this hill ... I used to go up there a lot. From that vantage point, one tends to think. You just watch clouds day after day and then you come upon certain ideas, philosophies that later on you find in a book ... and you discover that there are names to them, and maybe a whole science, and other religious based on it. The wonder of it kept me going.

How do you see yourself evolving still?

I really have no idea. It's not a conscious thing ... because seeking prepares me for life. I have certain ideas about craftsmanship, and that's the only thing I can have control over. Either it works or it doesn't; either it speaks to me or it doesn't. There is a part of me that knows I am actually giving the piece 100 percent attention. But what I paint ... sometimes I am painting something and I don't even know what it means until I see weeks after. It's only then that you see how it's connected to your life.

Surrealism ... the show is about your life. As a person, is there anything surreal about you?

Isn't everybody's life surreal?

But say that, painting for this show, you realized that you did not know much ... that there is still a long way to go. What else do you want to know?

It's not so much the end all answer that you're after; it's the more fact that you keep questioning, because you know that you're in motion. You know you're headed somewhere, but you're really not hung on the destination. And ... the more I have been painting, the more that I have been living, the more I realize that you don't know much. Painting is a humbling experience.

They say that your show is long awaited. What took you so long?

The way I see it, everything happened when it should have.

PUBLICIZE The Lightning in Arena, the show of paintings by the artist BRUIHN, runs until Jan. 11, 2003 at Arena, 3/F Greenhills 2 shopping center, Mabini City. Tel. 757-4999.)